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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

PRINT MEDIA COVERAGE OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY MAKING

BY

© JOHN ROBERT FISHER

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL 1988

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Print Media Coverage of Educational Policy Making" submitted by John Robert Fisher in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Dedicated
to my parents
J. Robert and
Muriel Toole Fisher

ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship of the print media in policy making in terms of newsworthiness, quality of coverage, impact and functions. Quantitative and qualitative methods were combined in a case study to provide a holistic view of the print media's relationship in the policy context. The case study was selected by surveying education officials and interest group leaders. Newspaper and magazine articles were analyzed and propositions were developed and tested through interviews with 21 subjects from government, interest groups and the print media. The resulting data were analyzed to define further propositions from which conclusions were developed.

Conflict was the print media's most important criterion for coverage of the policy debate. Controversial statements assured news coverage and good positioning. As long as the parties reacted to each other's comments, the media covered the issue. When the parties agreed not to discuss the issue publicly, the media soon lost interest.

Although coverage was extensive, it was not in-depth. More attention was given to the conflict than to an in-depth examination of the issues. Rather than being proactive in investigating stories, the journalists depended on events and sources for news material. While overall coverage of the issue was balanced, most individual items, including news items, showed bias.

The media had indirect impact on the policy decision. The impact was mediated through other groups in the policy process. Other group members were often influenced more by media coverage than the policymakers. They, in turn, generally had greater influence than the news media on the politicians. Media coverage was less influential in shaping policy than individual and group pressure on legislators.

Media impact seemed closely related to function. The print media performed a greater function in the less important roles of identifying and relaying interest group proposals than they did in identifying problems and suggesting solutions. They also functioned better in stereotyping, agenda-setting, and issue creation than in context-setting

and issue resolution. While coverage of conflict enhanced the former functions, the lack of in-depth coverage inhibited context-setting and issue resolution.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

1 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY 1
Nature and Purpose of the Study 3
Significance of the Study 4
Definition of Terms 7
Policy 7
Policy Making 7
Policy Actors 7
Print Media 7
Assumptions 8
Delimitations 8
Limitations 9
Organization of the Thesis 9

2 REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE AND CONCEPTUAL BASES FOR THE STUDY 12
An Overview of Mass Media and Politics 12
Emerging Press Roles 13
Powerful Mass Media 14
Criteria for Newsworthiness 15
How Reporters Define News 15
Reasons for Criteria 18
Quality News Coverage 23
Determining Media Performance 23
Comprehensiveness 24
Sensationalism 24
Balance 24
Objectivity 25
Mass Media Impact on Policy Making 26
How the Mass Media Affects Policy Making 27
Information Providers 28
Linkages 29
Agenda-Setters 30
Purveyors of Reality 32
Image-Builders 32
Impact in Relation to Other Influences 34
Differing Effect at Different Levels of Government 35
Evolution of Press Impact 36
How Much Impact 38
Policy and News Media Functions in Policy Making 40
The Policy Process 41
Functions of the Mass Media in the Policy Process 42
Conceptual Bases for the Study 45
Mass Media and Politics 45
Criteria for Newsworthiness 46
Quality in News Coverage 46
Mass Media Impact on Policy Making 47
Functions of the Mass Media in Policy Making 48
Summary 49

3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY 50
Research Orientation 50
An Eclectic Approach 52
Guidelines for Inquiry 52
Research Plan 54
Selection of the Case Study 55
Data Collection 56
Newspaper Clippings 56
Other Documents 57
Interviews 58
Sampling 58
Respondents 59
Data Analysis 60
Trustworthiness 63
Credibility 63
Transferability 64
Dependability 64
Confirmability 65
Ethical Safeguards 65
Summary 66

4 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE 68
Basis of the Teaching Profession Act 68
Early Unsuccessful Negotiations for a New Act 70
Teacher Efforts to Change the Act 70
Policy Governing Professions and Occupations 72
Resumption of Negotiations for a New Act 73
ATA Rejection of 1981 Proposal 73
Refining Drafts of the Act 75
The Keegstra Affair and the Dissolution of BTEC 76
The Firing of Jim Keegstra 76
Committee on Tolerance and Understanding 77
Teacher Evaluation 79
Need for a New Act 79
Dissolution of BTEC 79
ATA Alternative to BTEC 81
ASTA College of Teachers 81
Alberta Education Initiatives 82
Post-BTEC Negotiations for a New Act 83
Media Unawareness 84
Ministerial Request for Legislation 85
Agreement between Minister and ATA 86
Continuing Efforts of the Department 88
ATA Discontent with Process 89
Summary 90
Propositions 92

5 CONTENT ANALYSIS OF MEDIA COVERAGE 94
Division into Periods 95
Summary 96
Publications 96
Number of Items by Publication and by Period 97
Summary 99
Sources 100

Activity of Sources in Time Periods 101
The Use of Sources in Publications 103
Summary 106
Kinds of Items 107
Kinds of Items by Periods 107
Kinds of Items by Publications 108
Kinds of Items by Sources 110
Summary 111
Location 112
Location and Periods 112
Location and Publications 113
Location and Sources 114
Location of Kinds of Items 115
Summary 116
Length 117
Length by Publication 118
Length by Source 119
Length by Kind of Item 119
Length by Location 120
Summary 121
Viewpoint 122
Viewpoint of Periods 123
Viewpoint of Publications 124
Viewpoint of Sources 126
Viewpoint and Kinds of Items 128
Viewpoint of Items and Location 129
Length by Viewpoint 130
Summary 130
Summary 132

6 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF PRINT MEDIA COVERAGE AND INTERVIEWEE OBSERVATIONS 136
Period 1. Confrontation 136
Announcement of the Council 136
ATA Reaction to the Announcement 138
Minister's Rebuttal 140
Minister's Attempt to Bypass the ATA 143
Continuation of the Controversy 145
Annual Representative Assembly 146
Ministerial Initiatives 148
ATA Information Meetings 150
Meeting of the Minister and the ATA 152
Period 2. Consolidation 154
Continuing Coverage of Confrontation 154
Reduction of Newspaper Coverage 158
Period 3. Compromise 161
Negotiations 161
Announcement of Compromise 162
Announcement of Membership 164
Summary 165

7 ROLE OF THE PRINT MEDIA IN POLICY MAKING 169
How COATS Fit the Criteria for Newsworthiness 169
The Importance of the People in COATS 170
The Impact of COATS 172
COATS as a New or Unique Issue 173
Qualities of Drama and Action 174
Balance, Format and Competition 175
Summary 175
How Well Newspapers Covered COATS 176
Breadth of Coverage 177
Depth of Coverage 177
Balance of Coverage 181
Summary 186
Impact of Media Coverage 187
MLA Influence on the Minister 189
Influence of Education Officials 192
Influence of Media Coverage 193
Personal Effect on the Minister 194
Summary 195
The Role of the Print Media in Covering COATS 197
Policy Development in COATS 198
Media Functions 200
Summary 205
Summary of Findings 206

8 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS 208
Summary 208
Rationale for the Study 208
Conceptual Bases of the Study 209
Mass Media and Politics 209
Criteria for Newsworthiness 210
Quality in News Coverage 210
Mass Media Impact on Policy Making 211
Functions of the Mass Media in Policy Making 212
Research Design and Data Analysis 213
Selection of the Case Study 213
Data Collection 214
Data Analysis 214
Findings 215
Historical Perspective 215
Content Analysis 216
Qualitative Analysis and Interviewee Observations 218
Role of the Print Media in Policy Making 220
Conclusions 221
Criteria for Newsworthiness 221
Quality in Print News Coverage 223
Mass Media Impact on Policy Making 225
Functions of the Mass Media in Policy Making 227
Implications 231
Implications for Journalists 231
Implications for Policymakers and Interest Groups 233
Implications for Scholars 234
In Retrospect 236

BIBLIOGRAPHY 238
Periodicals and Books 238
Documents 243
Interviews 245

APPENDICES 247
APPENDIX A: CORRESPONDENCE 248
APPENDIX B: PROPOSITIONS 251
APPENDIX C: SEQUENCE OF EVENTS 252
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 253

LIST OF TABLES

Table		
2.1	Media Functions in Policy Making	44
5.1	Number of Items by Publication and by Period	97
5.2	Activity of Sources in Time Periods	102
5.3	Comparison of Sources in Large City and Small City Dailies, in Weeklies and in Other Publications	104
5.4	Comparison of Sources in Large City Dailies	105
5.5	Comparison of Sources in Small City Dailies	106
5.6	Kinds of Items by Periods	108
5.7	Kinds of Items by Publications	109
5.8	Comparison of Location Between Publications	114
5.9	Positioning of Items by Sources	115
5.10	Viewpoint of Publications	126

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		
5.1	Number of Items per Publication	96
5.2	Sources alone or in combination with others	101
5.3	Average length of item in column inches by period	117
5.4	Average length of items in column inches by publication	119
5.5	Average length of items in column inches by kind	120
5.6	Average length of items in column inches by location	121
5.7	Viewpoint of Publications	124
5.8	Viewpoint of Sources	127
5.9	Viewpoint of Kinds of Items	129
5.10	Viewpoint of Items by Location	130

Chapter 1

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

> The relationship of the politician and the press is really the most spectacular love-hate relationship, or hate-love relationship which exists. It's one of those cases where no divorce is possible. Each recognizes that in a democracy the press and politics are inseparable, mutually interdependent and that the union is until death do us part, no matter how violently the pendulum swings from love to hate and back to love again (The Honorable Richard A. Bell, former Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, 1967).

That the mass media influence politics and politicians, that they play a part in formulating public policy, and that they bring about change in political institutions and processes is taken for granted. Yet, research findings are unclear about the degree of mass media impact.

Since the early 1950s and the advent of television, most studies of mass media effects have shown minimal effect in changing opinions and attitudes. On the other hand, evidence has pointed to the media's role in setting the public agenda (Roberts and Bachen, 1981), but less clear is the media's influence in establishing the agenda of politicians (Gormley, 1975; Lambeth, 1978; Gordon, Cook, Tyler and Protess, 1982; Fico, 1984).

As Blumler and Gurevitch (1982:236-237) indicated, one reason for the lack of clear evidence may be that the study of mass media effects is "probably the most problematic sub-area" of communications research.

> Technically, whereas the design of effects research is inevitably intricate and demanding, the evidence that emerges from it is often "dusty"--i.e. complex in pattern, difficult to interpret, possibly inconclusive and rarely supportive of a picture of media impact as overriding, uniform or direct.

The reasons for these indeterminate results, according to the two authors, are (1) that the media are but one factor among many influential conditions, (2) that the exertion of their influence may depend on many other factors, and (3) that the extent and direction of their influence may vary across different groups and individuals.

Black (1982:243) described the problem in somewhat similar terms, stating:

> The press probably plays some part in most ... political functions and it does not have a monopoly in carrying out any one of them. They are all shared with other institutions. A study of any one function by itself would require examining all political structures in society.

Since mass media, according to these authors, are only one factor among many other influential factors in the political process, insights about their role and function in policy making might possibly be gained through consideration of the mass media's relationship in the whole process. This is probably best accomplished through a naturalistic approach which assumes that all parts of a phenomenon are interrelated so that one part inevitably influences the other parts. This approach dictates that a phenomenon be studied within its context and is based on the notion that the parts cannot be separated without distorting the whole process (Owens, 1982:6; Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

However, most studies in the area of mass media effects have taken a positivistic approach (Roberts and Bachen, 1981), examining the mass media in terms of separate variables with single, tangible and fragmentable parts. Nevertheless, a more holistic approach is possible as demonstrated by one group of researchers (Gordon et al., 1982), who combined a quantitative experimental methodology with a qualitative case study design to look at mass media effect in a political decisionmaking situation. Interestingly their most profound conclusions resulted from the qualitative portion of the study. This combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies with the adoption of an appropriate ontological view, which in this case suggests an examination from a holistic or contextual position, has been described as an "eclectic" approach (Eisner, 1984; Burger, Fisher and Thorpe, 1988). Although the positivistic approach has made many contributions to the study of mass communications and will most likely continue to do so, an eclectic approach may result in alternative and possibly more significant findings.

Probably because the mass media play an important role in the election process and possibly because of the ease with which news coverage can be examined during a shorter time period, a significant portion of the studies about the mass media and politics have looked at elections. Other studies have examined elected officials and their use of mass

media and the influence of the mass media on legislation. Fewer studies have examined mass media effects on policy making at the levels of federal and provincial (or state) government departments. Studies of the media at the local level are even more limited (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1982; Roberts and Bachen, 1981).

The next few sections relate these insights about the problems in studying political communication, about an appropriate ontological approach to respond to these problems, and about the aspects in need of examination to the purpose of the study and its significance. Further sections define terms to assist in understanding the study, describe the assumptions, limitations and delimitations of the study, and outline the organization of the study.

Nature and Purpose of the Study

This study examined the relationship between policy making and print media coverage at the level of a provincial government department. In that relationships are generally two way, the study looked at both the use of the print media by the policy actors and the policy news needs of the press. In addition, it examined the role of legislators, interest groups and the general public in relation to print media coverage in influencing policy development.

A framework proposed by Rivers, Miller and Gandy (1975) was adapted to examine the policy making/print media relationship in three categories: government and interest groups as sources of news, the nature of the print media, and print media impact on policy making. Policy actors and interest group leaders were studied in their role as news sources. Journalists were asked how they used these sources to cover a policy issue or news event. The nature of the print media was examined in terms of how policy issues and news events are selected as newsworthy and how they are covered in terms of depth and balance. Finally, the function and the impact of the news media in policy making were considered. Other influential factors in the policy setting were also explored.

This study adopted an eclectic approach, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies within a case study design. An effort was made to examine print media coverage in the whole context of a policy situation. Human sources were relied on to interpret the complexity of the situation, although content analysis was used to assist in understanding the role of news coverage. By adopting this approach, it was hoped that both the design and content of this study would provide a comprehensive view of the print media in a policy making situation.

A news media role in policy making was assumed. Conclusions about this role and about print media influence were developed from the review of literature. These were used in analyzing the findings from the content analysis of documents and news coverage and from the interviews of participants in the case study. Print media and policy making were examined as a relationship. Possible print media impact was explored.

The central question the study attempted to answer was; What is the role of the print media in policy making? To answer this question, four sub-problems of the study were addressed in light of print media coverage of the formation of the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards (COATS):

1. What criteria did reporters and editors use to determine whether comments, events or issues related to COATS were newsworthy?
2. How well was COATS covered in terms of accuracy, balance and depth?
3. What impact did the print media have on the policy decision?
4. What functions did the print media serve in the policymaking context?

Significance of the Study

It is hoped that this study will have significance theoretically, methodologically and practically. Gans (1983) cited five areas of research need in politics and mass communications, all of which to some degree were addressed in this study and support the claim to significance.

The first need was the examination of news gathering from outside news organizations, beginning with newsmakers and systematically covering other nonjournalist participants as well. This study drew information from nonjournalist policy actors in addition to newspeople, thereby advancing the practical knowledge about how the print media cover policy making.

A second requirement, which Gans called "conceptual and ideological stock-taking," involved the use of differing conceptual frameworks, values and ideology in studying mass communications. This study examined the media from an educational policy viewpoint as well as a communications perspective, bringing with it the framework, values and ideology of both positions. Furthermore, an eclectic approach drawing more from the naturalistic than the positivistic paradigm was used to study the relationship of policy making and mass media coverage.

A third was to look at the news audience, which Gans claimed had largely remained unstudied. Not only are policy actors and interest group leaders important newsmakers, but they are also an important segment of the political audience. Their role as an audience was examined in this study.

A fourth, described "in someways [as] the most urgent one," was to discover whether and how the news media affect politics. This particular case study sought to establish the degree and kind of mass media impact. If theory can be developed on the basis of accumulating knowledge from a number of cases, then this study will contribute a partial answer to the question of mass media effects in politics.

The fifth need cited by Gans was a "revival of qualitative content analysis" to understand what various media say, show, assume and value. The content analysis portion of this study combined both quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain a better understanding of the way the print media covered this particular policy issue. In addition, other qualitative methods were used to further explore print media coverage.

Meadow (1985) identified an emphasis on "crass empiricism" at the expense of theory as a serious problem in current political communications research. As a result of this study, additional information and insights for theory building about the relationship between the mass media and policy making have emerged. Conclusions were derived from the literature review and propositions developed from the content analysis which were tested through interviews with respondents from government, interest groups and the print media. Additional propositions were developed as the data were analyzed. These propositions form the basis of theory, which, although modest, may contribute to the bank of knowledge already accumulated about mass media and politics.

Since the impact of the mass media on policy making is fuzzy, it makes sense to continue to explore this relationship. As previously indicated, the naturalistic approach has not been used extensively in research into political communications effects. This study has drawn from the naturalistic paradigm, combining quantitative and qualitative methods in what is described as an eclectic approach. Hopefully, this approach has provided a different illumination of effects heretofore obscured by the use of narrower methodologies.

This study has suggested some guidelines for policy actors in their dealings with the press and for journalists in their coverage of policy issues. The study has provided insights about policy actors and interest group leaders as newsmakers and as users of the news. It has also documented benefits of mass media coverage. Moreover, it has identified and considered the impact of other factors in the policymaking process.

Administrators are required to be generalists in many areas. An area that is often neglected is press relations. One of the most effective ways of training administrators is through the case study approach. This case study should be helpful in training administrators in dealing with the media.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined because of their specific application in the study:

Policy

Policy is a decision implying impending or intended action, as distinct from a decision regarding some cognitive or evaluative state (Bauer, 1968, p. 21). This study considered public policy in an educational context as distinguished from policy in the private sector.

Policy Making

This is the process by which governments and their agencies, in the interest of the public, lay down major guidelines or policies for achieving future action by the best policy means (Dror, 1983, p.12).

Policy Actors

Policy actors in this study were the then Minister of Education, senior administrators in Alberta Education and interest group leaders, including elected officials and executive staff.

Print Media

For the purposes of this study, the print media were newspapers and magazines, while the mass media or mass communications included these media as well as television and radio. Called the press by Gordon and her associates (1982), the press or mass media also referred to employees in the mass communications industry, and print media referred to employees in newspapers and magazines, although they were more frequently called newspeople or journalists or by their specific titles such as reporters, editors and news directors.

Assumptions

The following assumptions underlie this study:

1. The relationship of the mass media and policymakers is reciprocal. The mass media play some role in policy making. Policy actors have a role as sources in news gathering. It is possible to document, interpret and analyze these roles.

2. From the documentation, interpretation, and analysis, propositions about the relationship of mass media and policy making can be developed.

3. It is possible to study policy making and mass media coverage and to develop propositions using an eclectic approach and a case study design.

4. All parts of policy making are interrelated so that one part inevitably influences the other parts. The parts cannot be separated without distorting the whole process, although it is possible to examine a part singly while recognizing its linkage to other parts.

5. The respondents, who served as the principal interpreters of the role of the mass media in policy making, were competent and truthful in answering questions and have provided access to relevant documents.

Delimitations

The study was delimited in that it dealt with a case study of one major policy issue and the related policy decision in Alberta's department of education, officially called Alberta Education. This issue and the subsequent events, related to the establishment of the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards (COATS), received extensive coverage in the mass media during a two-and-a-half month period after its announcement in March 1985.

It was also delimited to an examination of the print media. This decision was made because of the ease in getting print documents and because of the lack of availability of broadcast materials. The print media continue to play an important role in political decision making despite the increasing importance of television (Fletcher, 1981, p.113). This seems

to be particularly true at higher levels of information holding, for example where specific knowledge is necessary to understand proposals (Benton and Frazier, 1976).

The respondents were those people who played a role in the policy making process leading to the announcement of the decision and in the following public debate. These included the print journalists who covered the event, the president and senior administrators of the Alberta Teachers' Association, the principal interest group, senior officials and managers of the department of education, and the minister of education and his executive assistant. Their perceptions and interpretations served to further circumscribe this investigation.

Limitations

Because the study was limited to one case in educational policy making and to those people involved in the case, the results might not be transferrable to other situations. In addition, since the interpretations were shaped by the researcher's ability and background as both a former newspaper reporter and journalism instructor, other inquirers might not come to the same conclusions. However, appropriate measures (detailed in Chapter 3) have been taken to enhance trustworthiness.

Availability of documentation and the recall and perceptions of respondents may have also limited the study.

Organization of the Thesis

The thesis is organized into eight chapters. Chapter 1 described the nature and purpose of the study which was to examine the relationship between policy making and mass media coverage. Its significance was outlined and definitions, assumptions, delimitations, and limitations were noted.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature related to mass media and politics, the nature of political reporting, and the mass media and policy making. An overview of mass media and politics is given. The criteria for newsworthiness and measures of quality are explored.

Functions and impact of the media in policy making are detailed. From the literature conclusions are developed which form the conceptual bases for the study.

Chapter 3 gives details of the research design and methodology. It clarifies the research orientation, including information about the eclectic approach. The research plan is outlined including selection of the case study, content analysis and development of propositions, testing of the propositions through interviews, data analysis and the drawing of conclusions. Measures for ensuring methodological rigor and trustworthiness are identified and ethical safeguards are detailed.

Chapter 4 provides a historical context to the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards (COATS), beginning with a review of the origins of the Teaching Profession Act as well as the negotiations for revisions to the Act. Other factors affecting COATS such as the dissolution of the Board of Teacher Education and Certification and the Committee on Tolerance and Understanding are considered.

Chapter 5 reports the quantitative content analysis of news coverage which followed the announcement of the Council on March 29, 1985. From the analysis, propositions were developed which were tested in interviews with participants in the case study. These propositions form a portion of the findings of the study.

Chapter 6 provides an account of the public debate about the formation of the Council, as described by newspaper coverage, by the observations of the participants in the events as well as by official documents. Both the media's record and participants' accounts are presented so as to facilitate sound judgment of the realities of the period. Propositions were developed which are added to the findings of the research.

Chapter 7 responds to the central question of the study which is the role of the print media in policy making. To answer this question, each of the four sub-problems are addressed in light of print media coverage of the formation of the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards. Further propositions were developed to add to the findings.

Chapter 8 presents an overview of the study including its purpose and significance, the conceptual bases, and the research design and methodology. These are followed by a listing of the propositions derived from the data which constitute the findings of the inquiry. The chapter draws upon the conceptual bases and the findings to formulate the conclusions of the investigation. Comments follow regarding the implications of the study for journalists, policymakers and interest groups, and scholars.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE AND CONCEPTUAL BASES FOR THE STUDY

This chapter summarizes selected literature about the topics of mass media and policy making and provides a conceptual orientation for the study. To clarify the concepts used in the investigation, the literature review is organized around five topics: (a) an overview of research about the mass media and politics, (b) the criteria for newsworthiness, (c) the determination of quality in news coverage, (d) the mass media impact on policy making, and (e) the functions of the news media in policy making.

No attempt is made to establish a priori theories from the literature review. However, the material is synthesized and organized according to the study's sub-problems in order to provide a conceptual bases from which to begin analysis of the data in the case study. This section uses the term mass media, since most articles and studies refer generally to all media, rather than specifically to print media.

An Overview of Mass Media and Politics

Research into mass media effects in politics is in its third stage. During the initial stage from about the turn of the twentieth century to the outbreak of the Second World War, researchers attributed considerable influence to the mass media in shaping opinion and belief. Then, during a period of proliferation of studies in the social sciences, the researchers concluded that the media's influence was not as important as they had previously thought in bringing about opinion and attitude change. Rather during this second phase from the 1940s to the early 1960s, researchers characterized the mass media as important in relaying information and in reinforcing beliefs. Currently, in the third stage, researchers are reconsidering earlier assumptions and reopening many questions about mass media effects so that they are looking at a number of freshly conceived roles for the press in the political process.

Emerging Press Roles

Blumler and Gurevitch (1982, pp. 240,241) describe five areas of recent paradigmatic shift in the roles of the press in the political process: (a) from focusing on attitudes and opinions to cognition; (b) from defining effects in terms of change to structuring or restructuring of cognitions and perceptions in terms of agenda setting or construction of social reality; (c) from the simple linear model of communications effect to more complex approaches represented by "uses and gratifications" studies (Blumler and Katz, 1974), convergence and co-orientation models (McLeod and Chaffee, 1973), and "chain reaction" models (Kepplinger and Roth, 1979); (d) from viewing professionals as "gate-keepers" to "shapers of public consciousness"; and (e) from concentrating on election campaigns to a broader focus of study where mass media play a role in a variety of everyday political activities.

The assumption prior to the 1940s was that the mass media had massive propaganda impact. Compatible with the ideas of mass society, these theories suggested that because of industrialization and urbanization people were cut off from their traditional social networks and consequently were vulnerable to the direct manipulation by "remote and powerful elites" in control of the mass media (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1982, pp. 242, 243).

However, these theories were largely discredited beginning with Lazarfeld, Berelson and Gaudet's (1944) study of the 1940 U.S. presidential elections which indicated "only limited change had occurred during the campaign." Throughout the next 20 years repeated studies showed "how little effect the mass media appear to have had on the outcome" of elections (Lang and Lang, 1966, p. 455). Klapper (1960, p. 15), in an overview of literature on mass media effects, saw mass communication functioning more frequently as "an agent of reinforcement than as an agent of change." During this period Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) developed the "two-step flow" notion of information diffusion,

suggesting that the news media influenced opinion leaders and that they in turn influenced others.

Powerful Mass Media

The reinforcement doctrine of political communication remained virtually unchallenged for more than 20 years until in the late 1960s new studies suggested "a return to the concept of powerful mass media" (Noelle-Neumann, 1974). The studies recognized changes in the political environment, changes in the media environment, and changes in the way of conceptualizing media effects, all of which undermined the reinforcement doctrine (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1982, pp. 245-249).

In the political environment, party loyalists have been supplanted by "independents," who are quite often as well informed and politically interested as the party members and who rely heavily on mass media information to make up their minds during election campaigns (Chaffee and Choe, 1980). In the media environment, television has taken a prominent role, helping to restructure the political audience (McQuail, 1972). As for changes in conceptualizing media effects, less attention has been paid to persuasion and greater attention to cognitive research. Rather than focus on attitude change through exposure to persuasive messages, researchers have looked at the political impact of mass communication in terms of its information-transmittal function. A major concept is agenda setting, which suggests the media audience will adjust their perceptions of the importance of political issues to correspond to the coverage given those issues by the news services (Blumler and McQuail, 1968; Becker, McLeod and McCombs, 1975; Shaw and McCombs, 1977; Soderlund, Wagenberg, Briggs and Nelson, 1980).

In summary, recent media effects research has considered the media as powerful in shaping the categories and frameworks through which people perceive socio-political reality. Investigators have emphasized the impact of the media in producing and communicating these frameworks, rather than their impact in determining specific opinions

and attitudes. The mass media play a role in a variety of political activities, not just at election time. The result has been a much better informed public who are less subject to the influences of political leaders. Television has played a prominent role in restructuring the political audience and has affected the way newspapers cover events and the way politicians and other news sources approach the news media. These relationships are best described in complex rather than simple linear models.

This concept of powerful mass media is worth examining in the context of political communications. Because of the extent of mass media coverage of politics and their effect on the public and on politicians, it is appropriate to consider the relationship of media coverage to one aspect of politics, that of policy making. Since television has played such a role in shaping these audiences and had such an effect on newspaper coverage, television's impact on newspapers should be a consideration in a study of print media coverage of policy making. These might best be examined through a case study approach to better describe the complexities of the relationship.

Criteria for Newsworthiness

Much of the socialization to journalism involves learning what is news. Over the decades a number of criteria have emerged for judging newsworthiness, but in spite of these measures news judgment is often nebulous and intuitive. In newspapers these criteria have changed somewhat with the advent of television and with the transfer from independent to chain ownership.

How Reporters Define News

Reporters find it difficult to define news. And, when they do, according to Delmer Dunn (1969, p.24), it is defined "with a high order of abstraction." When first asked to define news, he (1969, p. 24) says they answer, "You develop an instinct for news-- you know intuitively what is and what isn't news."

Pressed further, Dunn adds (p.25), the reporter is "slightly more concrete, but still nebulous." Reporters will say, "News is what is important,... what touches most lives."

Then, at a third level of news conceptualization, Dunn (p. 25) indicates that reporters will list a number of criteria. "First, conflict, controversy, or attack pique the readers' interest.... Second, change generates reader interest.... Third, the unique is newsworthy.... Finally, names make news, because ... people are interested in what top officials say and do."

A popular newswriting textbook (Mencher, 1984, pp. 72-76) enlarges on Dunn's list of what makes news. These criteria , in the order presented in the textbook, include: (a) impact -- events that are likely to affect many people; (b) timeliness -- events that are immediate, recent; (c) prominence -- events involving well-known persons or institutions; (d) proximity -- events in the circulation or broadcast area; (e) conflict -- events which reflect clashes between people or institutions; (f) the bizarre -- events that deviate sharply from the expected and the experiences of everyday life; and (g) currency -- events and situations that are being talked about.

Herbert Gans (1980) provides a more extensive list that news people use for judging newsworthiness:

1. Stories must be either important or interesting, "the ideal being an important story that is also interesting" (p.147). Stories are important because they involve important people. "The higher an actor is in the governmental hierarchy, the more his or her activities are of importance" (p.147). Stories are also important because they affect the "interests" and "well-being" of the nation (or the province or the community). In addition, they have impact on many people and "significance for the past and future" (pp.148-152). Interesting stories are "prototypically, people stories" (p.155).

2. A second criterion is production considerations. This is where "medium... connect story selection to technology" (p.157). This is part of McLuhan's (1964, p. 7)

meaning when he said "the medium is the message." Because of deadlines and space requirements some stories make the news, while other stories may not.

3. Next, novelty is a reason. Is the story new? "Like bakery products, news can be fresh or stale, although staleness is more often a synonym for repetition than for old age." Because journalists are often reporting the same story "over and over again," they become bored with the story and assume that the reader is also bored (pp. 167-171).

4. Not only must a story be new, but it also must be good. A quality story reports "dramatic activities or emotions," but if it doesn't have action, "journalists try to add what they can during story production." It must make its point and be well written (pp. 171-173). Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, Roberts (1978, p. 58) suggest that "the setting up of a topic in terms of debate within which there are oppositions and conflicts is one way of dramatising an event so as to enhance its newsworthiness."

5. Stories are also selected on the basis of balance. The mixture of stories in an edition of the newspaper must be diverse and also provide geographic, demographic, and political balance in order to appeal to a wide audience (pp. 173-176).

6. Finally, competition is an important consideration. Editors and production managers may choose stories "because they expect the rival to do so." And, "to avoid being viewed as imitating or falling behind the competition, [they] will also drop or play down a story that has already been used by a rival" (pp.176-181).

Another consideration in determining newsworthiness is whether the news item fits within the editor's or reporter's preconceived notion of the angle from which the story should be handled. Ericson, Baranek, and Chan (1987, p. 222) indicate that, in deciding to cover a story, the editor visualizes how the story should be reported. The assignment will indicate the angle, who to contact and what information to pursue. In addition, reporters may specialize in angles and so receive assignments partly on the basis of their specializations. However, although reporters may receive direct orders for a particular

angle, they still view the story from their own perspective and thus "frame" stories to fit their preconceived notions.

Once a frame is set the reporters are not inclined to look at other information or different frames that do not fit the view of how the story should be covered (Ericson, Baranek and Chan, 1987, p. 293). Thus, valuable information or different angles are not considered.

As elaborated by Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke and Roberts (1978, p. 59):

> Effectively, then, the primary definition sets the limit for all subsequent discussion by framing what the problem is. This initial framework then provides the criteria by which all subsequent contributions are labelled as "relevant" to the debate, or "irrelevant" -- beside the point. Contributions which stray from this framework are exposed to the charge that they are "not addressing the problem."

In summary, in order to be newsworthy, a story must involve important people, affect many lives, and be interesting. It may also have past or future implications. It must be new, unique, and have qualities of drama and action. Conflict and controversy are important in creating drama and action. It must also have appeal to a wide audience. Then, if the timing and space requirements are right, if the item fits the preconceived angle or frame, and, if the competition has not already "scooped" the idea, the story may make the news. A consideration of these criteria in relation to the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards warranted further investigation. Such an examination showed the reasons for reporting this policy issue in hopes of clarifying the media rationale for covering policy issues generally.

Reasons for Criteria

A number of factors have affected how journalists' view news. One is the influence of the businessmen owners whose main concern is with profit. To increase revenues, newspapers, in particular, have been forced to appeal to a broader audience in an effort to attract more advertising dollars. The competition of television for audience and advertisers has also had its effect on news judgment and reporting.

Media ownership is more and more concentrated in the hands of a few businessmen, to whom "the business imperative is uppermost" (Comber and Mayne, 1986, p. 24). In addition, according to Desbarats (1985, p. 96), corporations have discovered that "one of the most effective ways to sway public opinion, to influence government, and to protect commercial interests, is to own a newspaper, or other news media."

As the Davey Committee reported almost two decades ago, "good newspapers usually happen when (a) the operation is financially secure and (b) people who care more about journalism than about balance-sheets control the editorial product" (Senate Committee Report, 1970, vol. 1, p. 86). Yet, "few 'gatekeepers' can be unaware of the financial interests of their proprietors.... Much depends, therefore, on the self-restraint of owners and the degree of independence of working journalists" (Fletcher, 1981, p. 114). Still, as Desbarats (1985, p. 96) indicates, "the public rarely discovers the views of working journalists." For example, although many journalists favored the recommendations of the Kent Report, newspapers reported the opposition of their owners. "There has always been this tension between journalists and media owners but in recent years, the growth of newspaper chains and the virtual elimination of competition among daily newspapers has tilted the balance of power away from the journalists."

Businessmen buy newspapers because they are highly profitable (Royal Commission on Newspapers, 1981). To attract advertising dollars, newspapers have appealed to a larger, more middle-class audience. They have had to moderate their views in order not to offend these new readers and corporate sponsors (Comber and Mayne, 1986, p. 24). In addition, to reach this audience, news stories must have geographic, demographic and political balance. In order to hold the audience, they must also be entertaining.

The growth in concentration of ownership and the competition for audience has coincided with the development of television (Royal Commission on Newspapers, 1981, p. 142). Television has completely changed the way journalists view news and the nature

of reporting. According to Comber and Mayne (1986, p. 169), "the values which direct this powerful technology are primarily show business values: action, colour, style, and especially conflict." Television, suggest Almond and Powell (1978, p. 158), in its competition for viewers, tends "to emphasize problems and conflicts and to give them an immediacy not possible in other media." This, they argue, "undermines citizen confidence and even institutional support."

The emphasis, Comber and Mayne argue (1986, p.11), has changed since the advent of television "from getting the facts to getting the pictures." And, the problem with defining news in terms of novelty and action is that these criteria "pretty well dictate what the reporter can say. It is easier to illustrate confrontation than harmony, war than peace."

Comber and Mayne (1986, pp. 98-99) further commented about the importance of novelty and action in deciding what's news.

> Defining the news almost exclusively in terms of new and dramatic events makes it difficult, if not impossible, for the media to cover the ebb and flow of political debate effectively. Politics is about the competition of ideas, points of view, and policies. Because the media focuses on events not processes, coverage of political debate gets turned into a caricature of real political dialogue. Politics becomes a spectator sport.

According to the Royal Commission on Newspapers (1981, p. 143), "newspapers appear to have been heavily influenced by television coverage with its emphasis on attacks and counter-attacks, leadership, color, action, and the 'horse race' aspects of campaigns. Local and regional issues have been neglected." Fletcher (1981, p. 113), who edited one of the research papers which accompanies the commission report, wrote, "Most editors continue to take a short-term view of the news, stressing speed, brevity, and audience appeal over investigation, reflection, and significance."

The television has not only affected the choices of editors, but has also pressured reporters. "A story must now have high entertainment value to warrant coverage, and it appears that a few high-status reporters in the Gallery can influence the selection, even the

slant, of stories about federal political issues and events" (Comber and Mayne, 1986, p. 27).

Ownership, audience, and television affect the decisions of editors and news directors in choosing what to cover and also how to cover news. One result of the trend to a concentration of ownership in the hands of big business is that the media focus "on public rather than private sector abuses of power" (Fletcher and Taras, 1984, p. 217). In addition, according to Couture, Lehman and Nosyk (1983, p. 28), the media has a definite bias favoring privately-owned business over crown ownership.

Another result is that most media, including newspapers, "present the same common, or homogeneous, 'media version' of political issues and events" (Comber and Mayne, 1986, pp. 24-27). The main stories of the day are "generally identified collectively and often given a common interpretation." This is partly because the parliamentary press galleries operate by "herd instinct." Editors complain if their staff copy differs significantly from the wire stories on the same topics (Fletcher and Taras, 1984, p. 207).

A third effect is a more cynical, confrontational style of journalism. Created by television, this has "spilled over" into newspapers. As indicated by the Royal Commission on Newspapers (1981, p. 143),

> emotional political conflict is made to order for television news, but information about complex political situations is extremely difficult to present on television in ways that will interest and inform viewers. In theory, the brief news reports on television should be complemented, for the audience, by information in newspaper articles. In reality, print journalists tend to follow the camera, microphones and lights toward television's story and, in many cases, to form part of the cast of extras that eventually appear in the television report.

As an example of this effect, Anthony Westell (1976, p. 63, see also Fletcher and Taras, 1984, p. 207) suggested that "question period...is almost a perfect media event. Public personalities come into Conflict over current Controversies, providing in one neat package the basic ingredients of a news story." But, as pointed out by Fletcher and Taras,

"these stories meet the standard criteria of news but provide little information about policy development or the philosophic differences between parties."

This tendency to be driven by business and audience concerns so as to compete with television has brought newspapers to emphasize style over content. Rather than filling pages with "short articles with catchy headlines," Couture, Lehman, and Nosyk (1983, p. 27) suggest that newspapers should emphasize articles on current issues. However, Thomson and other newspaper owners see this notion as naive. "If short articles with catchy headlines sell more newspapers, then short articles with catchy headlines is what newspapers will publish," they assert (Couture, Lehman, and Nosyk, 1983, p. 27).

Mencher (1984, p. 86) describes the influence of owners on how news is covered and what is published.

> The chain newspaper might be light on local news, which is expensive to gather, and heavy on wire news and syndicated material, which requires only editing. An anonymous home office concerned with the profits of the chain may direct the editor of the local newspaper to the bottom line on the ledger rather than to the local news hole figures. The editor may not be willing to run the story that would provoke local advertisers or the major employer in town.

In summary, the trend in newspapers has been toward a concentration of ownership and greater competition with television for a share of the audience. The effect has been to adapt television style to the print media. The result has been that news must be interesting and have qualities of drama and action. Conflict and controversy are two factors which provide these qualities. One of the important factors affecting the policy process in establishing of the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards was the conflictual relationship between the Minister of Education and the executive of the Alberta Teachers' Association. For this reason, an understanding of the reasons and the approach of the mass media in covering conflict is important.

Quality News Coverage

The Royal Commission on Newspapers, through its own research, through public hearings, and from letters from newspaper readers across Canada, arrived at a national consensus on the quality of political journalism. According to the Commission (1981, p. 135), political reporting "has lost vitality, and with this has come a decline in the regard for the newspaper as an institution." The reason, one group of political scientists (Couture, Lehman and Nosyk, 1983, p.27) stated, is that newspaper owners are too profit oriented and investigative reporting costs money and lowers profits. "The small publisher in charge of a small community newspaper will fill the pages with all the news that's cheap to print just as the large publisher with many newspapers will."

"Reporters rarely have the time to dig behind the scenes for the real story of how decisions are made," wrote Fletcher and Taras (1984, p. 207). The reason is that editors consider "routine coverage" more important. Thus, "much government activity goes unreported as the majority of reporters concentrate on Question Period and government announcements (with opposition reactions)." Adequate reporting is rarely given to the courts, regulatory agencies and the daily operations of the civil service and cabinet.

Determining Media Performance

Media performance is generally judged in terms of accuracy, comprehensiveness and balance. These factors are interrelated. Reasons for inaccuracy include omissions of relevant information, failure to explain complex material adequately, underemphasis of important aspects of the story, overemphasis of negative or unimportant aspects of the story, unbalanced treatment, misquoting and taking information out of context, and misleading and inaccurate information (Ryan and Owen, 1977, pp. 27-32). Omissions of relevant information, failure to explain complex material adequately and underemphasis of important aspects of the story are reasons for a lack of comprehensiveness. Overemphasis

of negative or unimportant aspects of the story leads to sensationalism and unbalanced treatment is the antithesis of balance.

Comprehensiveness. Comprehensiveness of coverage is considered in terms of breadth and depth. Breadth is the extent and depth is the detail of coverage. Extent of coverage is studied in terms of number of stories or column inches (Winter et al., 1982). Detail is studied in terms of the aspects of stories and issues covered (Larson, 1985; Sullivan, 1985).

Sensationalism. Sensationalism, according to Glynn and Tims (1982), is (1) an obvious overstatement of fact, (2) an emphasis on unique aspects of the situation, (3) bias based on value judgments, (4) association of the subject of the story with an irrelevant issue, and (5) treatment of the story in a frivolous manner. Reporting sensationalism and covering controversy and crisis to the exclusion of other news is a form of imbalance (Hachten and Beil, 1985).

A Royal Commission on Newspapers (1981, p. 77) survey ranked sensationalism second after advertising on a list of things newspapers do too much of. Fifteen percent of newspaper readers surveyed categorized "sensationalizing, dramatizing or reporting of scandals" first. Tied for fifth place at five percent was "bias" and "violence."

Balance. According to Gans (1980, p. 175), balance is achieved "by identifying the dominant, most widespread, or most vocal positions, then presenting 'both sides.'" When two sides of a story are presented, the news is "more objective" and "often more dramatic as well."

A number of studies have considered balance of viewpoint. For example, Becker (1977) looked at three elements in determining perspective of newspaper coverage during the 1971 Indian-Pakistani War: slant of headline, slant of lead and proportion of story favoring one side or the other. Paraschos and Rutherford (1985) examined television coverage of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. They categorized statements on four levels: (1) relevant or irrelevant to either of the main actors, Israel or the PLO, (2) Israel or

the PLO as the main actor, (3) whether the reporter was the source of the statements or whether a named or unnamed source was quoted, (4) favorable, unfavorable or neutral to the main actor. A statement was coded favorable to Israel or the PLO when: (1) it portrayed Israel or the PLO or their officials or military favorably, (2) it portrayed Israel or the PLO or Palestinians as acting in defense of a homeland, its people or both; (3) it associated the main actors with a desirable condition or behavior. A coefficient of imbalance was calculated.

Objectivity. Objectivity is the glue which binds accuracy and balance together. As Gans (1980, p. 176) indicated, "the news is more objective when there are two sides to a story."

By seeking to exclude conscious values (Gans, 1980, pp.182, 183), journalists try to achieve objectivity. They attempt to maintain detachment from the news, "by disregarding the implications of the news." Newsmen "do not choose the news on the basis of whom it will help or hurt"; they "do not care how the story comes out." As Daniel Schorr (reported in Gans, 1980, p. 185) said, "I remained the untouched observer, seeing the whole picture because I was not in the picture...."

According to the doyen of American journalism educators, John C. Merrill (1985, pp. 391-393), "Conventional wisdom among journalists is that objectivity in reporting is paramount and that the newsperson who is objective has fulfilled the highest and most responsible expectation possible." He found that the majority of journalists equate objectivity with journalistic ethics. This suggests some interesting questions, he says:

> When a reporter decides what to put in the lead of his story, is he being subjective or objective? When a reporter decides what story to write and which ones to ignore, is this being subjective or objective? And what is the relation of such questions to the subject of ethics--if any? ... What is the relationship between a reporter's basic editorial decision-making and objectivity? Between decision-making and ethics?

In spite of the news media's pretense of excluding conscious values, complete objectivity is probably not achievable. Yet, because of their efforts to achieve objectivity,

Gans (1980, p. 184) suggested that journalists are "perhaps the strongest remaining bastion of logical positivism in America." But, as Merrill suggests and Lincoln and Guba (1985) claim, being value-free may be impossible.

The Royal Commission on Newspapers (1981, p. 140) suggested that there is no longer a division between editorials and objective reporting. Now, there is "a no-man's-land of individual commentary inhabited by cartoonists, columnists, photographers and photo editors on occasion, and reporters aspiring to analytical journalism." The lack of partisan editorials in today's newspaper doesn't necessarily suggest that there are not strong viewpoints in all sections of the paper.

In summary, quality of news coverage is measurable in terms of accuracy. Among the factors determining accuracy are comprehensiveness and balance of coverage. Comprehensiveness is defined by its breadth (extent) and depth (detail). Fair coverage of all sides of a story without sensationalism provides balance. The reporter's objectivity controls balance and fairness of coverage. Whether a reporter can be truly objective is questionable. The question of quality of news coverage as it affected the establishment of the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards is important in understanding the relationship of the mass media in this policymaking case. Quality and fairness of coverage not only has an effect on the relationship of journalists and policymakers but also has an impact on how the mass media influences the policymaker's choices.

Mass Media Impact on Policy Making

Although news people try to give the impression that the media are only "common carriers" of political information, the very process denies this view, packaging the information "in the technological shapes and institutional values that fit the carrier's delivery system" (Black, 1982, p. 242). While only intending to produce "a good paper or broadcast," still journalists' "revelations" frequently influence politics in ways that are "both unintended by the journalist and usually completely unforeseeable." In addition,

"wherever publishers try deliberately to direct certain events through news or editorial campaigns, as often as not the results are just the opposite of what was wanted" (Black, 1982, p. 247).

The media are considered a powerful force in politics, affecting policymakers and the policymaking process in a number of ways. Still the amount of impact is questioned. The impact of the media is mediated by the pressure of other influences, by the varying effect of the media at different levels of government, and by changing factors in the relationship between politicians and the press.

How the Mass Media Affects Policy Making

Siegel (1983, pp. 14, 15) lists five ways that the mass media affect policymakers and the policymaking process. Firstly, as information providers, they survey society and transmit an account of political happenings. They also "make people famous" and those who are "well-informed" become influential as opinion leaders.

Secondly, the mass media form a major link between the public and the government. This linkage forms in part the "public's involvement in the political process" and helps define the "democratic nature" of the government system.

As agenda-setters, the media not only describe the political events as their editors perceive them, but they also "pick and choose" the issues they regard as important. The mass media are the "most important--if not the only--information source about politics for the general population."

From editorials, background and interpretive stories, columns, and political cartoons, the media become purveyors of an ideological viewpoint, providing a "meaningful picture," and supporting a structured viewpoint.

Finally, because politicians recognize the impact of the press on the public, politicians pay close attention to media coverage and the editorial views about politics.

Information Providers. Studies seem to indicate that the press has more effect as common carriers of information than in influencing policy choices. But, as Linsky (1986, p. 145) suggested, "officials cannot be expected to identify instances when they altered their own best judgment because of influence they felt from newspapers and television."

Abrams and Hawkins (1984) found elected officials stressing the surveillance aspect of newspapers, but rejecting the medium as a decision source. News stories seemed to have more influence on legislators than editorials because of disputes overtime with editorial advice. Lawmakers view themselves as more knowledgeable about the media than the media about the world of elected officials, probably because of the media's failure to present facts as sources see them.

Fico (1984, p. 799) found that lawmakers ranked reporters more influential in the five functions involving transmittal of information to the public and less influential in functions involving personal influence in the legislative setting. In addition, Fico discovered that influence-oriented legislators made the most use of reporters for both information and publicity, and evaluated most highly the influence of the reporters on the policymaking process. Policy-oriented lawmakers made the greatest use of reporters for publicity, but considered them to have only slight influence on the policy process. Committee leaders made the least use of reporters for either information or publicity and seemed to see reporter influence as derived from government. Election-oriented legislators found reporters personally helpful for information, but lacking influence on the policymaking process.

According to the Royal Commission on Newspapers (1981, pp.135, 138), newspapers have generally "lost the impact they once had on public thinking" because of a decline in their interpretative role and their public affairs reporting. "They have adapted to the standard of television journalism, with its emphasis on political leaders rather than the issues for which they stand." Newspapers seek to purvey drama and action rather than

capitalizing on "their own very real advantages of depth and comprehensiveness." Yet, the Globe and Mail continues to be influential because it has "a clearly defined idea of its own role" and "substantial editorial resources." It is read by almost three-quarters of the "most important decision-makers in all parts of Canada and at all levels of government." In addition, it is read regularly by 90 percent of media executives and it "tends to set the pace for other news organizations."

Linkages. The press and the party system were identified in 1955 by Canadian historian Frank H. Underhill (p. 34; see also Royal Commission on Newspapers, 1981, p. 136) as "the two chief instruments in democratic communities for mediating between the government at the centre and the citizen body at the circumference." The decline of the partisan press and of the party system has probably done much to affect a change in the role of both as linkages between the government and the public in Canada.

Although the partisan press began its decline almost a century ago, it was not until the advent of television and chain ownership, that newspapers moved completely away from the realm of partisan politics. For example, up until the Thomson purchase of the Lethbridge Herald in 1980 it was considered a "Liberal" newspaper. The result was more neutrality in reporting which the Royal Commission on Newspapers (1981, p. 140) suggested "can take the edge from a newspaper's political coverage." No longer did newspapers have the strong political influence they once had.

> Publishers and editors may proclaim a new independence from political influence but the fact is that politicians, in the main, have stopped trying to convert or corrupt them. The attention of the political world is elsewhere, distracted by the television screen and new problems of communication. Few politicians can spare much time for editors who no longer have firm party loyalties, devoted readers, or recognizable public reputations. The modern editor, anonymous to his or her readers, is of less account in political circles than the electronic journalist armed with a camera and microphone (Royal Commission on Newspapers, 1981, p. 137).

As party loyalists have been replaced by "independents," the importance of the mass media as linkages between politicians and the public has increased. Independents often are as well informed and politically interested as the party members. However, rather

than depending on party communications, they rely heavily on mass media information to make up their minds during election campaigns (Chaffee and Choe, 1980). Television has moved the campaign from the political platform to the livingroom.

Agenda-Setters. Roberts and Bachen (1981) indicate that numerous studies support "a causal influence of the media on the public's agenda." The influence of the media on the agenda of elected officials is less well studied (Gormley, 1975; Lambeth, 1978; Gordon et al., 1982; Abrams and Hawkins, 1984; and Fico, 1984) and the results do not show the same strong causal relationship.

From a study of North Carolina state senators, Gormley (1975) concludes that a strong positive relationship in broad issue areas exists when correlating newspaper agendas to legislator agendas. However, he was unable to categorically state the direction of the relationship. Either the newspapers set the elected officials' agenda or the senators set the newspapers' agenda in broad areas.

On specific issues, however, the same strong correlation did not exist. One reason, Gormley states, could be that senators were "cross-pressured by competing agenda-setters." While legislators are exposed to the issue priorities of newspapers, they are also exposed to those of other legislators, the executive, administrators, lobbyists, and constituents.

Gordon et al. (1982) investigated whether a causal relationship exists between the broadcasting of a television news story, attitude change among consumers of information, and policy agendas of politicians. They used quantitative methods to survey the public and government administrators. However, in order to determine the effect of the program on eventual public policy, they resorted to qualitative methods.Their data showed the issue became more important on the public the agenda. The results also suggested clear attitude changes resulting from airing the television program.

The TV program did not similarly influence government administrators. It altered the government elites' perception of the issue's importance, their belief that action was

necessary, and their perception of the public's view of issue importance. This change correlated with their belief in the accuracy of the media. Regardless the issue remained last on their list of priorities.

In analyzing the case study, the researchers discovered that the TV report "stirred the policy waters considerably," but it was not the airing of the news story which created the impact, nor was it public arousal or attitude changes in lower level government policy elite. Rather, it was the "active collaboration between journalists and policymakers in the ongoing process of the media investigation that created the policy outcome." More important than the news program were the interpersonal contacts between reporters and lawmakers.

According to Linsky (1986, pp. 144-145), the "emergence of television as a central medium of public affairs has had...an impact on the techniques and the routines of how reporters and officials do their business with one another." New technology has "enabled the networks to break stories and beat the newspapers to the news, so that they are now doing their own share of agenda-setting for officials as well as other journalists."

On the Canadian scene, Fletcher and Taras (1984, p. 206) pointed out that the agenda of "Question Period in Parliament and most provincial legislatures is largely determined by the contents of the major daily newspapers each day." Partly since the advent of television into Question Period, it has become more of a media event. It forms a major portion of political news coverage.

The role newspapers play as agenda-setters for other media is often overlooked. "Within the small world of the media," stated the Royal Commission on Newspapers (1981, p. 143), "print remains the agenda-setter." The first business of every day in radio and TV newsrooms is reading newspapers, most often the Globe and Mail, followed by the principal regional paper and then the CP wire, which is drawn mainly from newspapers. "With the print journalists in Ottawa following on the heels of broadcast journalists, with

editors in TV newsrooms using newspapers as a guide to newscast line-ups, the process of 'pack journalism' reaches a circular absurdity."

Purveyors of Reality. According to the "social construction of reality" theory by Gerbner et al. (1979), the media, particularly television, have become for many people the prime source of social reality. The media give them "a coherent picture of what exists, what is important, how things are related and what is right." The theory is based on the assumptions that people are becoming more dependent on vicarious sources of experience, that television projects a consistent view of the world through repetitive and pervasive patterns, that viewers use television "largely non-selectively and by the clock rather than the program," and that "violence plays a key role in TV's portrayal of the social order."

Although Gerbner applies the social construction of reality theory more generally, Linsky (1986, p. 140) applies it in a policymaking context. As a result the press and policymakers are engaged "in a continuing struggle to control the view of reality that is presented."

Image-Builders. In support of Siegel's view of mass media power, Canada's former Progressive Conservative leader Robert Stanfield, after his unsuccessful bid for power in 1974, pointed to a photograph showing him fumbling a football as a factor in his party's election loss. The media are image-builders, Stanfield (1980, p. 7) states, and as such they affect politicians. "The image is the maker or the breaker. It is more important for a politician to have a good media image than a good idea." As a consequence, politicians are pushed toward "controlled stage productions" which "serve as a tool for the manipulation of public opinion by skillful politicians and their public relations advisors."

Conservative Prime Minister Joe Clark also predicted going into the election in 1980 that "if I'm beaten, it will be because of image" (Black, 1984, p. 97). The Conservatives lost and in 1983 Brian Mulroney replaced Joe Clark as leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

This sentiment is echoed by Fletcher and Taras (1984, p.210) who claim that "the main consequence of television's dominant role is that style tends to overwhelm substance." For example, they say that election campaigns become "contests of television performance, favoring some leaders over others on attributes which have no significance for capacity to govern."

Comber and Mayne (1986, p. 170) mirror similar concerns about the paradoxical nature of mass media power in shaping politics and politicians. "Because of the media's influence, [it] is less likely than ever before to result in the election of political leaders who can make wise decisions on our behalf." A new set of leadership characteristics are required, they claim, which "relate to media relations skills, style, charisma, and, in short, star quality as defined by show business.... One of the problems of democracy is that the skills required to be elected are not quite the same as those required to govern well...."

The effect of the media as image-builders also applies more generally to the coverage of day-to-day policymaking activities. According to Fletcher and Taras (1984, pp. 208-210), governing parties have an advantage in that they can normally get more than their portion of media coverage. Yet, because of the "negative tone of recent coverage, especially on newscasts," this extra exposure has been a "mixed blessing." In addition, the use of television in the House of Commons has increased the visibility of opposition leaders and critics, "putting them on a more equal footing with the prime minister and cabinet." Mainly because of the focus on Question Period, government leaders have image problems while opposition leaders are seen favorably. The "decline in popular support" for Parliament maybe attributable to negative media coverage which centers on conflict. This attention to conflict may be the cause of "a sense of continuing crisis that alienates citizens from the political process."

Impact in Relation to Other Influences

Some researchers indicate that the mass media are ineffective in bringing about change on their own. Opinion leaders, party workers and interest groups also play a role in influencing politicians and policy. In addition, public opinion has a strong influence on politicians. By influencing opinion leaders, party workers, interest groups and the general public, the media can have an indirect influence on policy.

"The use of the mass media as an instrument of change," Almond and Powell (1978, pp. 96, 97) stated, "may be ineffective unless combined with other socialization agencies. Frequently, messages from the mass media are "not received or not interpreted directly." Rather, "the process is mediated through local opinion leaders." This was the basis of Katz and Lazarsfeld's (1955) "two-step flow" notion of information diffusion, which suggested that the news media influences opinion leaders who in turn influence others.

Pross (1984) identifies three communications systems which serve as linkages between the public and politicians. These are the party system, government itself, and pressure groups. All provide a means for influencing policy. Pressure groups or interest groups are often effective when the other systems fail. They identify and articulate the views and needs of individuals with a common purpose and apply pressure on government in specific policy areas.

Gergen (in Bauer and Gergen, 1968, p. 187) did not recognize a direct influence of the mass media on policymakers, but suggested an indirect effect through the general public. Persons controlling the mass media gain a considerable degree of leverage over issues of public policy because they can influence public opinion. Such leverage is not confined to newspaper editors, television and radio commentators, and the like. Persons of high rank or station are often considered newsworthy in themselves and thus gain almost automatic access to the mass media.

Differing Effect at Different Levels of Government

Linsky (1986, pp. 140-142), in surveying senior federal policymakers in the United States, found that 96 percent felt the press had an impact on federal policy and "over half of them considered the impact substantial" (Linsky, 1986, pp. 140-142). Part of the reason, he indicated, is that "everywhere policymakers turn in Washington there are reporters to deal with." Because of the "sheer presence of the press," policymakers cannot avoid the media. A result is that the "policymakers' jobs are different from what they otherwise would be.... Policymakers spend a lot of time thinking about and dealing with press matters."

Although Canadian policymakers at the federal level face similar challenges, the impact of the press does not seem to be as great. The Ottawa political scene does not seem to be covered nearly as well as in Washington where the press's presence is greater. The Royal Commission on Newspapers (1981, p. 141) reported that growth in the Parliamentary Press Gallery has not kept up with government's increase in size. While the increase has been substantial from 88 in 1959 to 234 in 1981, "it has grown more slowly than government and it has failed to keep pace in experience and expertise."

The Commission pointed out that "vast areas of official activity are rarely covered." These include the superior courts, regulatory agencies, and bureaucratic policy formation. "In many cases," according to the Commission's research, "the growth of the galleries has merely resulted in more reporters chasing the same stories, often from the same perspective." Coverage is more often than not centered around Question Period.

An example of what has happened, particularly to the role of newspapers in covering federal politics, is the "typical Ottawa scrum of journalists besieging a politician for comment." In the centre, surrounding the politician, are the radio and TV journalists who ask the questions. On the other hand, "the print journalists scribble in their notebooks on the sidelines." Answers to questions are typically "short clips tailored for newscasts" rather than the "substantial discussions" needed for in-depth coverage. According to the

Royal Commission (1981, p. 142), "the requirements of television news have clearly helped to make political coverage more superficial."

At the provincial and municipal levels the situation is "even worse" (Fletcher and Taras, 1984, pp. 207-208). "The provincial galleries face many of the same problems as the Ottawa gallery." In addition, because they are much smaller, there is "even less opportunity for specialization." Municipally, "city hall reporters are rarely specialists in local government." They "tend to focus on personal conflicts at the council level, ignoring important committees and boards."

However, at the provincial and municipal levels, newspapers play a greater role, possibly even a leadership role, because television plays a lesser role. The Royal Commission on Newspapers (1981, pp. 138, 139) stated that newspapers "enjoy a clear monopoly on editorial comment" with respect to local affairs. In addition, there is evidence that, while television sets the election agenda federally, at the local level "newspapers can affect election outcomes."

Evolution of Press Impact

In Canada, beginning about the turn of the twentieth century, mass circulation newspapers began to replace party newspapers. By the Depression, the transformation was complete mostly complete, although it was not until the 1960s that the Union Nationale party in Quebec relinquished control of the Montréal-Matin. Newspapers avoided "blatant partisanship" because it might "offend some readers and thus threaten profits" (Royal Commission on Newspapers, 1981, p. 137).

Objectivity became the guide for news stories. Still newspapers were rarely neutral editorially. Their publishers were often partisan and "enjoyed playing politics as much as their colonial predecessors" (Rutherford, 1978, p. 69). It was only with the coming of television and chain ownership that partisanship has completely disappeared.

One effect of chain ownership has been the closing or amalgamation of competing publications in a number of cities. For example, in Victoria, where Thomson combined two competing newspapers into the Times-Colonist, the Royal Commission on Newspapers (1981, p. 140) discovered "a high degree of dissatisfaction by citizens and politicians alike with local political coverage." The result was "a sudden increase in attempts by politicians to use the media, particularly radio and TV, to communicate directly with citizens."

Linsky (1986, p. 142) indicates that 20 years ago "a spirit of cooperation used to characterize the way reporters and officials interacted. While in 1961 James Reston of the New York Times held back on coverage of the Bay of Pigs invasion, today news organizations agree to self-restraint "only after great internal angst and after making an independent judgment that lives are threatened or the national security is at stake."

In addition, Linsky (1986, pp. 144-145) noted a change in the attitude of reporters. It has changed "from an earlier, healthy skepticism, to a more current, unhealthy cynicism on the part of the press."

According to the Royal Commission on Newspapers (1981), newspapers are no longer the only source of political news and commentary. Still they are unrivalled in their capacity to gather news and to cover events in depth. Yet they often fail to do this because they are too preoccupied with routine coverage or with keeping up with television. Still when they do, they can have great effect. Because of this, "newspapers remain indispensable in the whole process of reporting and evaluating political activity" (Royal Commission on Newspapers, 1981, p. 138).

The Royal Commission on Newspapers (1981, pp. 143-144) claimed that television's tendency to make leadership the prominent theme in election campaigns has spilled over into newspaper coverage as well.

> ...increasingly [newspapers'] best talents and most prominent columns are given over to reporting and reviewing the campaign's electronic circusses where the stars of politics and television journalism compete for public attention. By following this course, newspapers place themselves on the sidelines, to some extent, and miss an opportunity not only to provide

> in-depth political news and commentary that most of their readers cannot find elsewhere, but to regain their primacy as the main channel of communication between government and people.

This stance has led to a serious weakening of the fundamental role of newspapers in democratic society. However, the Royal Commission on Newspapers (1981, p. 144) indicated that newspapers are largely to blame.

> By their emphasis on personalities, rather than the exploration of issues, they have followed television up a blind alley. They have lost much of their audience for serious discussion of public affairs because they have not put into political reporting and analysis the resources required in a world of increasingly complex issues. They have not taken advantage of their own strengths.

Another aspect of change that has occurred relates to the increasing use of polls by politicians and the effect of polls on journalism. A little over 20 years ago, "politicians relied to some extent on journalists' assessment of public opinion." According to the Royal Commission on Newspapers (1981, p. 144), "this ceased entirely in the 1962 election." This "first scientific election" in Canada used "intensive, privately commissioned public opinion surveys, statistical analysis, and the latest techniques in advertising and mass communications."

Polls have become a major ingredient of the mass media coverage of politics. The result is that even if politicians wanted to ignore the polls, they can't. According to Jeffrey Simpson (1987, p.7), a political columnist for the Globe and Mail, "polling numbers take a life of their own; and perception becomes reality."

> Once the media rush to judgment following a given poll or series of polls, the politicians instinctively feel they must shift their behavior accordingly. They can soldier on in face of adverse perceptions built upon questionable interpretations of fallible polling data, but invariably the temptation arises to cut and run, or at least to trim and tack.

How Much Impact

According to Almond and Powell (1978, pp. 96, 180), the impact of the mass media on long-term policies and development is complex and disputable. The number of messages and their lack of specific direction limits the effectiveness of the mass media in

policy making. How much impact is uncertain, although a number of studies have arrived at generalized statements of level of influence.

Gormley (1975) discovered a strong positive relationship in broad issue areas but not in specific issues. Rather than having strong influence on elected officials, the results from Lambeth's (1978) study showed that the impact of the press is viewed as low to moderate. Gordon and her associates (1982) indicated that the most important influence was that of reporters' interpersonal contacts with lawmakers. Abrams and Hawkins (1984) noted that elected officials stressed the importance of the surveillance aspect of newspapers, but rejected the medium as a decision source. Fico (1984) indicated that reporters ranked more influential in transmitting information to the public and less influential in the legislative setting.

In order to understand how the press affects policies themselves, Linsky (1986, pp. 145-146) examined six policy decisions where the media seemed to play a role. He discovered that in only three of six cases "did it appear that there was a significant impact of the press at the heart of the policy itself." Even in these cases, he indicated "the impact of the press tended to be on the likelihood of certain policy choices being adopted or implemented." Thus, "the press appeared to affect the odds in favor of one option or another rather than being the dominant force in policy determination."

Linsky also indicated that the press appears to have the "most significant" influence in the early stages of the policymaking process. This is partly because issues are not yet clear nor have all questions been asked and answered. Officials, he studied, indicated that "the media do a lot to set the policy agenda and to influence how an issue is understood by policymakers, interest groups, and the public."

Although there is "far less consensus ... about how the impact is felt," policymakers also indicated that the press influences the process of policymaking by speeding up decision-making and, through negative coverage, by pushing the decision

making "up the bureaucracy." Nevertheless, policymakers denied the press has an impact on their own policy choices.

In assessing the impact of newspapers, the Royal Commission on Newspapers (1981, p. 135) claimed that "in their public affairs reporting and in their interpretative role, [daily newspapers] have lost the impact they once had on public thinking." Partly, this is because they have adapted to the "standards of television journalism." In addition, chain ownership has tended to withdraw newspapers from "commitment on issues of national importance." Finally, politicians rely more on polls to gain a reading of public opinion than on newspapers.

In summary, studies of mass communications effect do not show the news media have a strong influence in policy making, although they have some impact. This seems to contradict evidence that suggests a powerful mass media. While the press has great effect on image-building and other similar political functions, it does not seem to have the same influence in policy making. Important to this inquiry was an understanding of how the mass media influence policy making and the relationship of other influences in this process in order to resolve this apparent contradiction.

Linsky (1986, p. 140) summarizes the relationship of the press in policymaking this way:

> Reporters and officials are not partners in policymaking. They do different jobs. They have different interests. Journalists usually do not have personal and professional stakes in the outcomes of policy debates. They are more like stockholders who care less whether or not the market moves up or down than whether or not it is moving. Their stake is not in a particular policy result, but in the continuing story...and in the story continuing.

Policy and News Media Functions in Policy Making

Sometimes called the "fourth branch of government," the mass media serve a number of functions within a policy context. The relationship of reporters and policymakers is important. As indicated by Fletcher and Taras (1984, p. 208), "politicians

need publicity to promote themselves and their programs and reporters need information and quotes for their stories." In addition, mass media coverage of policy meets a number of other needs (Fletcher and Taras, 1984, pp. 194, 208). It presents citizens the necessary information for "effective political participation" and provides a forum for "debate on public issues." It helps governments circulate "vital information about public services--and government accomplishments--while providing opportunities for opposition parties to criticize government and propose alternative policies." Governments will also often use the press "to test public opinion by leaking proposals to a reporter who will value the "scoop."

The Policy Process

Two aspects of policies are generally considered the most significant: the policy process (policy making) and the policy content. The policy process refers to the way in which policies are formulated. It is mainly concerned with the structure of the decision-making organization, the individuals involved in making of policy, external groups which influence policy making, the communication patterns, and the like. Policy content is largely determined by the policy process (Alves, 1985, p.12).

Mansbridge (1978), in reviewing the policy making process in the Alberta department of social services, describes the origins of new policies as the result of a combination of the following events: (1) recognition of a basic need, (2) research by the appropriate agency, (3) a position paper containing recommendations, (4) public debate of the conclusions, (5) a set of proposals for study by the appropriate cabinet committee, (6) a directive setting out the goals of government, and (7) a resultant implementation plan with assigned resources to achieve the policy objectives. Mass media involvement in the policy process would occur as one of the many factors during event #1 "recognition of need" and #4 "public debate of the conclusions."

Jones (1977, p.12), in providing a framework for analysis of policy making, proposes five policy stages: problem identification, program development, program

implementation, program evaluation, and program change or termination. Almond and Powell (1978, pp. 14,15) examine the process level of the political system, identifying four functions: interest articulation (the making of demands), interest aggregation (the proposal of alternatives), policy decision making and policy implementation. To these they add at the policy level the analysis of political outputs and outcomes. At the articulation level, they (Almond and Powell, 1978, p.180) recognize the mass media as "one formal, institutional channel of access to policymakers."

Alternately, Dunn (1981, p.48), in suggesting a process for policy analysis, includes structuring policy problems, forecasting policy alternatives, recommending policy actions, monitoring policy outcomes, and evaluating policy performance. Wirt and Mitchell (1982, pp. 6,7) look at a sequence of decisions in policy making, considering the emergence of issues, deliberation of policy options, adoption and allocation of resources and values, and review of implementation and outcomes.

After examining descriptions like these of the stages in the policy process, communications researchers have then developed corresponding political functions for the mass media.

Functions of the Mass Media in the Policy Process

Black (1982, p. 249) suggests a hierarchy of three roles for the news media in the political process and attributes a number of political functions to each role. Classified under the role of common carrier are the functions of data circulation, interest expression, mobilization, stereotyping, interest aggregation and political socialization. Under the second role of reporter are the functions of legitimation, watchdog, recruitment, context-setting, agenda-setting, decision-scheduling and also political socialization. Finally, categorized under the role of political actor are integration, ombudsman, issue creation, value manipulation, opinion forming and issue resolution.

In studying reporter influence, Lambeth (1978, p. 12) used the framework devised by Jones (1977) to structure ten media functions in the policy process: (1) anticipating problems in advance of public officials, (2) alerting the public to problems on the basis of official warnings, (3) informing the public of the stakes the competing groups had in solving problems, (4) keeping various groups and the public abreast of competing proposals, (5) contributing to the content of policy, (6) deciding the tempo of decision making, (7) helping lawmakers decide how to vote, (8) alerting the public to how policies are administered, (9) evaluating policy effectiveness, and (10) stimulating policy reviews.

In his study of lawmakers' use of reporters, Fico (1984, pp. 795, 799) replaced Lambeth's functions 4 and 5 with "informing affected groups of their own stakes in the problem" and "informing the public of proposal content."

In a preliminary study to this research by this researcher, the functions of Lambeth and Fico were tested in a content analysis of newspaper items about education. Sixteen mass media functions under six policy stages were developed. It was found that news publications performed a greater function in identifying and relaying stakeholder group proposals to the public than they did in the articulation and identification of problems. The number of news items which impact policy decisions were few. In practice, more news items were published for information purposes rather than persuasion. News publications served more as common carriers, less as watchdogs, and least as policy actors. Table 2.1 shows the typology developed through this content analysis.

In summary, in its development and implementation, policy goes through a number of stages. At each stage, the mass media play functions, although the functions seem more important in relaying information than in influencing the policy process. An understanding of the media functions and their relative importance led to a better assessment of the impact and the relationship of the mass media and policy making in this investigation.

Table 2.1

Media Functions in Policy Making

Policy Stage	Media function
1. Problem identification/ articulation	a) Identification of problems by media
	b) Relaying problems to the public as identified by policymakers
	c) as identified by interest groups
	d) as identified by the public
2. Policy recommendation/ aggregation	a) Identification of groups and proposals
	b) Identification of policymaker proposals
	c) Media suggestion of content
3. Policy decision/adoption	a) Setting tempo of decision making
	b) Recommending how to vote
	c) Informing public of content
4. Policy implementation	a) Describing administration
	b) Alerting public to problems
5. Policy evaluation	a) Evaluating effectiveness
	b) Reacting to policy
6. Policy resolution or change	a) Stimulating review
	b) Proposing change or termination

Conceptual Bases for the Study

The conceptual bases for this study has been derived from the forgoing review of selected literature. Stated in the form of conclusions, these proved valuable in guiding the collection and analysis of data and in developing the propositions which emerged from the findings. Key concepts which have assisted the inquiry relate to the nature of political communications generally and to each of the four sub-problems dealing with the criteria for newsworthiness, the quality in news coverage, the impact of political reporting, and the functions of the mass media in the policymaking process.

Mass Media and Politics

1. Rather than having great influence in changing attitudes and opinions, the mass media structure the knowledge and perceptions people have about what is important and about how they view reality. Journalists are not simply "gate-keepers" of information but are "shapers of the public consciousness."

2. The effect of the mass media on people and on institutions is best described in complex rather than simple linear models.

3. The mass media play a role in a variety of everyday political activities, not just at election time.

4. As "independents" in the political environment, people rely heavily on information from the mass media when making up their minds rather than on statements and publications coming from government or party officials. However, mass media consumers are not easily manipulated nor controlled by the mass media. But, because of the pervasiveness of media coverage and because people have become avid media consumers, the media have made people more knowledgeable about politics and less subject to the influences of opinion leaders.

5. Television has played a prominent role in restructuring the political audience and also has affected the way newspapers cover events and the way politicians and other news sources approach the news media.

Criteria for Newsworthiness

6. Journalists judge newsworthiness of a story on the basis of a number of criteria. A story must involve important people, affect many lives, and be interesting. It must be new, unique, and have qualities of drama and action. It must also appeal to a wide audience. Timing and space requirements must be right. How the competition is covering the story is also a consideration as is the angle or framing of the story.

7. These criteria have evolved over time, but most recently they have been affected by the advent of television and the concentration of ownership. Other media have had to conform to television's standards and approaches in order to appeal to a wider audience, and thereby meet the owners' expectations for profits.

8. The result of these trends has been to focus on public rather than private abuses of power, a more cynical, confrontational style and an emphasis on style over content. Conflict and controversy make a story interesting and provide drama and action. Short articles with catchy headlines have replaced in-depth coverage. Most of the media present the "same common or homogeneous media version" of political happenings.

Quality in News Coverage

9. News coverage is considered accurate when it is comprehensive and balanced.

10. Comprehensiveness of coverage is judged in terms of breadth (extent) and depth (detail). Extent of coverage is determined by the number and length of stories. Detail is measurable by the aspects and issues covered.

11. Balanced reports include "both sides" of a story. Overemphasis of the negative, dwelling on the sensational, and exclusive coverage of controversy and conflict can lead to imbalance.

12. Balanced stories are "more objective." Objectivity is also achieved by maintaining detachment from the news. Yet, impartiality is not possible, because even choices of what to cover are subjective. In addition, individual commentary has gone beyond the editorial staff and is no longer limited to the editorial pages.

Mass Media Impact on Policy Making

13. The influence of the mass media on policy decisions has declined, particularly among newspapers. Rather than filling an interpretative role, newspapers have followed the lead of television in emphasizing political leaders over issues.

14. Although the media serve as a link between politicians and the public, the decline of the partisan press means that politicians no longer have control over the messages that reach the public.

15. Although there is some evidence that the mass media set political agendas, the amount of influence is uncertain. Competing agenda-setters using personal contact may have greater influence. Television competes with newspapers in agenda-setting, except that typically newspapers act as agenda-setters for other media including television.

16. The media influence how people see reality. Recognizing this, politicians compete with the media to control the view of reality that is presented.

17. The mass media are image-builders and as such "make or break" politicians. Image becomes more important than substance. A perception of strong leadership is more important than positions on issues.

18. The mass media are ineffective in bringing about change unless combined with other influences. Opinion leaders, party workers, government bureaucrats and interest groups also play a role in influencing politicians and policy. In addition, public opinion has a strong influence on politicians. By influencing these groups, the media has an indirect influence on policy.

19. The mass media at the federal level exert considerable influence, but virtually ignores many aspects of government, while focusing mainly on the Legislature and Question Period. At the provincial level, where reporters are less specialized than federally, coverage of many government activities is even more sparse. Municipally, reporters rarely understand local government, centering coverage on personal conflicts at the council level. Newspapers seem to play a greater role at the provincial and municipal levels because of the lesser role played by television.

20. Newspapers are no longer the only source of political news and commentary, although they are unrivalled in their capacity to gather news and cover events in depth. Yet, they often fail to do this because they are too preoccupied with routine coverage or with keeping up with television.

21. The influence of the press seems to be greatest in the early stages of policy making where issues require clarification. The media help to set the policy agenda and to influence how an issue is understood by policymakers, interest groups, and the public. It is uncertain how much influence the press has on the policy itself. The press seems to influence the likelihood of certain policy choices being adopted rather than being a major force in policy determination.

Functions of the Mass Media in Policy Making

22. The mass media serve a number of functions in the policy process. Among these are presenting citizens with information that aids participation in politics, providing a forum for debate on the issues, helping government circulate information about public services and accomplishments, and giving opposition parties and groups opportunities to criticize policy proposals and offer alternatives. Government may also use the press to test public opinion by presenting proposals as "trial balloons."

23. The press perform a greater function in identifying and relaying interest group proposals to the public than they do in the articulation and identification of problems. News

items which impact policy decisions are few in number. More news items are published for information purposes rather than persuasion. The media serve more as common carriers, less as watchdogs, and least as policy actors.

24. Rather than playing a role as a political actor in influencing policy choices, the press has greater effect as common carriers of information and as watchdogs.

Summary

The literature suggests a powerful mass media, particularly in the cognitive area of agenda-setting. On the other hand, studies show that the news media have only a moderate effect in policy making. This seeming contradiction justified an inquiry into the relationship of the mass media in policy making.

Any such relationship might be explored by examining the reasons for coverage of a policymaking case as well as the kind and quality of coverage. Besides impact other facets of the relationship might be examined such as the functions of the mass media in the policymaking process. These factors warranted attention.

To guide the collection and analysis of the data for this investigation, 24 conclusions were derived from a review of the literature about mass media and politics, specifically the areas of criteria for newsworthiness, quality of news coverage, impact in policy making, and functions of the media in the policy process.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research design and methodology of the study. The first section clarifies the research orientation. This is followed by an outline of the research plan including the selection of the case study and collection and analysis of the data. Methodological rigor is discussed in a section entitled trustworthiness. The final section details ethical safeguards.

Research Orientation

Since the Greenfield-Griffiths debates beginning in 1974, a considerable amount has been published either criticizing or defending the functionalist-positivist approach to research. The debate has focused primarily on ontology, epistemology, and the underlying value bases (Burger, Fisher and Thorpe, 1988, p. 1). Ontology deals with assumptions about the nature of the phenomena under examination. According to Burrell and Morgan (1979, p. 1), ontological questions about reality are basic to any research. For example, the researcher is faced with questions of whether the reality under study is "external to the individual -- imposing itself on individual consciousness from without -- or the product of individual consciousness." Epistemology, on the other hand, deals with the origins, presuppositions, nature, extent and veracity of knowledge (Angeles, 1981, p. 78); in other words, how one understands the world and communicates that understanding to others. The supposition is that different ontological and epistemological viewpoints, combined with different values underlying research, will direct the researcher toward different research methodologies.

During the 1950s and 1960s, social science research, including that in the areas of educational administration and communications, was mainly positivistic and used quantitative methods. In the Greenfield-Griffiths debates, Griffiths supported the continuation of this approach while Greenfield argued for an interpretative approach.

Although positivistic approaches still dominate educational research (Hanson, 1985) and communications studies (Roberts and Bachen, 1981), recently support has grown for the exploration of other research forms.

Jacknicke and Rowell (1987) argued for complementarity in research.

> What is needed ... is a multiplicity of views and orientations along with differing approaches to research. Using a particular framework (paradigm) to guide our thinking not only leads us to certain kinds of outcomes, but also limits the kinds of questions we can ask. If we wish to come to a fuller understanding ..., we had best be prepared not only to be tolerant of, but also open to, alternative perspectives....

Recently, Griffiths (1983:219) admitted that "scientists now are much more concerned with the successful pursuit of knowledge than with the form of research." Griffiths (1988) indicated that a neo-positivistic research approach is emerging which recognizes traditional functionalist theory is too narrow to account for social reality. He also suggested that little research is occurring in a truly interpretive tradition and that the research being done is more practical than philosophical.

Howe (1985) suggested that combining qualitative and quantitative research methods is acceptable epistemologically. Smith (1983) and Miles and Huberman (1984) support Howe's suggestion of combining approaches, acknowledging a difference between methods and recommending a variety of approaches.

Burger, Fisher and Thorpe (1988, p. 84) proposed an eclectic approach, where "the researcher is free to choose whatever method best suits the research question. Judgments about methods are made less on the basis of paradigmatic purity and more on the basis of selecting methods which have promise for generating useful knowledge."

Eisner (1983, p. 14) postulated an eclectic model of research, commenting:

> I also accept the term eclecticist if the term refers to the belief that there is not now, nor is there likely to be, any single theoretical view that will encompass the whole of reality, and that therefore, the best we are likely to do is to draw from a variety of theoretical systems the kinds of guidance that when employed eclectically will be helpful to our daily work.

An Eclectic Approach

An eclectic approach was adopted for this study. Methods were selected on the basis of their potential for answering the central question of the investigation irrespective of their paradigmatic affinity. Thus to some extent, both the functionalist (positivistic) and interpretive (naturalistic) paradigms are reflected in the research orientation.

But, whereas the positivistic paradigm assumes a single, tangible reality that can be separated into parts for independent study, this study accepts the naturalistic claim that, since behavior is so significantly influenced by the context in which it occurs, human behavior cannot be understood without comprehending the framework within which the individuals under study interpret their environment.

Owens (1982, p. 6) summarizes the naturalistic view of the nature of reality in this manner:

> It is the view that the world we encounter "out there" is such a dynamic system that all of the parts are so interrelated that one part inevitably influences the other parts. To understand the reality of that world requires acceptance of the notion that the parts cannot be separated, bit by bit, for careful examination without distorting the system that one seeks to understand. The parts must be examined as best is possible in the context of the whole.

Guidelines for Inquiry

Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp. 39-43) outline fourteen characteristics of naturalistic inquiry which served as guidelines in doing this study.

1. Naturalistic setting. Phenomena are studied in their natural setting or context since "realities are wholes that cannot be understood in isolation from their contexts."

2. Human instruments. Because all instruments interact with respondents, only the human instrument is able to "encompass and adjust to the variety of realities that are encountered."

3. Utilization of tacit knowledge. In addition to propositional knowledge (that which is expressed by language), intuitive knowledge which captures more of the multiple realities is used.

4. Qualitative methods. Qualitative methods are also more adaptable to dealing with multiple realities than are quantitative methods, since they are more sensitive to the influences and value patterns exposed in the transaction between the investigator and the respondent. This proviso did not exclude the use of a mixed methodology which combines qualitative and quantitative methods (Burger, Fisher, and Thorpe, 1988; Howe, 1985).

5. Purposive sampling. This form of sampling increases the scope or range of data through revealing deviant cases as well as more of the realities of the situation. It maximizes the development of grounded theory by taking into account the "local conditions, local mutual shapings and local values."

6. Inductive data analysis. This process of "making sense" of data through general inferences from particular instances increases the possibility of identifying the multiple realities of the situation, because it is more likely to describe the setting, the mutual shaping influences, and values.

7. Grounded theory. Since a priori theory is unlikely to encompass the multiple realities, theory is derived from (grounded in) the data and then illustrated by examples from the data. In this study, a grounded-theory approach is used to develop propositions, not for the purpose of testing, but as a mechanism for analysis. It is from these propositions that conclusions are derived. The degree of empirical support for them is limited rather than substantial.

8. Emergent design. Since it is not possible to know enough about the multiple realities beforehand to construct an adequate design, the design is allowed to unfold as more is known about the situation. This did not preclude the need for a review of selected literature and the use of a conceptual framework for analysis.

9. Negotiated outcomes. Meanings and interpretations of the data are verified and confirmed by the human sources, since they are better equipped to interpret the complex mutual reactions. Conclusions drawn from the literature and propositions derived from a content analysis of articles were tested at the time of the interviews of the participants.

10. Case study reporting mode. The case study is more adaptive to describing and reporting the multiple realities and provides the basis for both naturalistic generalizations and transferability to other sites.

11. Ideographic interpretation. Interpretation is made by drawing propositions from the particular case rather than in terms of lawlike generalizations because different interpretations are likely to be meaningful for different situations.

12. Tentative application. Rather than making broad applications of the findings, the results are applied to the particular situation since they may not be duplicated elsewhere.

13. Focus-determined boundaries. Boundaries are set to the inquiry on the basis of the problem. The situation is permitted to define the focus rather than preconceived perceptions.

14. Specific criteria for trustworthiness. Criteria called credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability with corresponding empirical procedures are used to establish trustworthiness.

Research Plan

The general design of a case study as indicated by Bogdan and Biklen (1982, p. 59) is best described as a "funnel." At the wide end, the researcher looks around for possible places and people that might be the subject or source of data. When he discovers what he wants to study, he then "casts a net widely about" trying to evaluate the appropriateness of the setting and the data for the study. As the search continues for information, the researcher continually modifies the design, choosing the best procedures to learn about the

topic. In time, he makes specific decisions on what aspects of the setting, subject or data he wants to study. At that point, the work develops focus.

This is an appropriate description of the development of the research design and selection of the case in this study. Although a preliminary research plan was developed in the thesis proposal, the design was allowed to emerge as more was learned about the case selected for the study.

The following account describes the approach which was taken. Firstly, a case study was selected by surveying education officials and interest group leaders. After a preliminary selection of a case, official documents and newspaper and magazine articles were gathered and a judgment was made about the appropriateness of the setting and the data. Then, in order to provide focus, a content analysis was done of the articles and propositions were developed from the analysis. The propositions were tested and further data about the case were gathered through interviews. Finally, the data were analyzed and the case was written up.

Selection of the Case Study

Following an approach similar to that of Gormley (1975) in his study of newspaper agendas and political elites, a survey of education officials was conducted to determine an appropriate case for study of print media coverage and educational policy making. Senior officials of the department of education in Alberta were asked to rank recent initiatives of the department as to their importance educationally and then also to indicate their perception of the amount and kind of mass media coverage of the initiatives. Their perceptions were then checked with senior administrators of the teachers' and the trustees' associations.

Although the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards was not ranked among the top five educational initiatives, all officials suggested it as a good case study because it was a significant policy decision which had received considerable mass media coverage. Stakeholder administrators verified this perception. In addition, a preliminary search

revealed the availability of many articles and documents about the case. Newspaper coverage was confined to a two and a half month period in 1985. For these reasons, it was selected for study.

One problem which was considered during the selection process was whether to examine a "typical" or "unusual" situation (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982, pp.62, 63). The advantage of the "typical" case route would have been that the study findings may have had greater transferability. On the other hand, the "unusual" case might provide insights about mass media beyond what is already known. This case had characteristics which were both "typical" and "unusual." It was typical of the kind of story and coverage handled regularly by the mass media. However, it was unusual for education officials to be involved in an issue of such controversy with so much media coverage.

Data Collection

Qualitative methods, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 199), consider the human as the instrument of inquiry and include normal human activities, such as looking, listening, speaking, and reading. Interviewing, observing, watching for the tacit as well as the obvious, interpreting, and digging out documents and records are all legitimate qualitative modes. The researcher is the key instrument in data gathering while the natural setting is the direct source of the data.

The data in this study were obtained from three main sources: (1) non-official documents including newspaper and magazine articles and editorials, (2) official documents, correspondence, minutes of meetings, reports and official publications, and (3) semi-structured interviews, which were tape recorded and transcribed.

Newspaper clippings. The original set of newspaper and magazine articles were taken from clippings gathered by the communications branch of Alberta Education, the provincial department of education. Each work day staff members at the branch clip articles, editorials and letters about basic education from Alberta daily newspapers, from a

selection of Alberta weekly newspapers, from Alberta Report, the province's only weekly news magazine, and from national publications including the Toronto Globe and Mail and Maclean's Magazine. These clippings are circulated to the Minister of Education and to senior officials in the department. The Alberta Education articles were checked against the articles clipped by the communication director of the Alberta Teacher's Association and against the items in the files of the Alberta Legislature library. Articles were added from these sources. These articles, totalling 171, formed the basis of the content analysis described in Chapter 5.

The "article" technique of content analysis was used because it is "easily and quickly" applied to both volume and slant of news and editorial content. It also has a high degree of predictability (Windhauser and Stempel, 1979, p. 152). Each newspaper item served as a unit of analysis. Each was identified by date, by publication, by sources, by kind, by viewpoint, by location and by length. In addition, a summary was written for each.

Articles were quantified at a nominal level by counting frequency of occurrence as a percentage of the total under the classification schemes. The frequency counts were cross-tabulated to make comparisons between variables. Summaries were used in preparing a sequence of events and in checking the trustworthiness of conclusions from the quantified data.

Other documents. Comments by the Minister of Education and by other Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) made in the legislature during Question Period about the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards were extracted from Alberta Hansard, the official record of the legislature. In addition, other documents, such as minutes of meetings, correspondence, reports and official publications were photocopied from the records of Alberta Education and the Alberta Teachers' Association and from the files of respondents at the time of the interviews.

Interviews. Interviewing was the principal means of data collection. Interviews served five purposes: (a) to document personal and group perspectives about the events relevant to the study, (b) to provide data not available in documents, (c) to confirm and assist in interpretation of data from documents and other interviews, (d) to test propositions developed from the content analysis of newspaper and magazine items, and (e) to provide a source for documents and other interviews.

Specifically, in addition to giving hard data about the events related to print media coverage of the Council, the interviews provided perceptions about the relationships among the participants, both as policymakers and as journalists. Respondents gave information about the events and issues leading up to the announcement of the Council and about those during the period of public debate of the policy. In addition, they answered questions related to the relationship of the press and policymakers in the policymaking process and about the four sub-problems of the study. Propositions derived from the content analysis were given to the respondents and they were asked to comment on them. This information was valuable in expanding on data from the articles and documents and in helping to understand them.

Sampling. Respondents were selected through purposive sampling, the aim being "to maximize information, not facilitate generalization" as achieved by random sampling. The purposive sampling was used "to document unique variations that have emerged in adapting to different conditions," to identify as many details or aspects of the case as possible in order to develop the "unique flavor" of the context, and to garner as much information as possible so that propositions emerged (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, pp. 199, 202; Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 48).

The study combined the reputational approach (Bauer and Gergen, 1968) and the snowball technique (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982, pp. 66,67) as means of achieving purposive sampling. Sources were selected initially because of their known involvement in the case, and then as recommended by others or as mentioned in documents. They were

selected from government, from interest groups and from the news media. As interviewing continued, information became repetitious, a clear indication that the purposive sampling had achieved its aim.

Respondents. Twenty-one participants were interviewed. Their names and positions at the time of the debate over the Council appear in the Bibliography. In addition to the Minister of Education, seven other people from Alberta Education were interviewed: the Minister's executive assistant, the deputy minister, two assistant deputy ministers, the communications director and the director and associate director from legislative services. The president and five administrators from the Alberta Teachers' Association were interviewed. These included the executive secretary, the assistant executive secretary, two executive assistants, and the coordinator of communications. From the Alberta School Trustees' Association the assistant executive secretary and communications officer were interviewed. Five journalists were interviewed including a magazine publisher, an editor from a large city daily newspaper, two legislative reporters from large city dailies, and the education reporter from a small city rural daily.

About a week before each interview subjects were sent a package including a letter describing the study and detailing ethical safeguards, a sequence of events as prepared from the newspaper and magazine articles, a list of propositions prepared from the content analysis and, in some cases, photocopies of selected articles.

Interviews followed a semi-structured format (Guba and Lincoln, 1981, pp. 164-170), with the use of an interview guide consisting of open-ended questions in order to obtain a maximum amount of information and to explore new questions that arose spontaneously during the discussion. (A copy of the interview guide appears in the Appendix.) During the interviews, as suggested by Dexter (1970, pp. 5,6), interviewee's were allowed to define the situation, were encouraged to structure the account, and were permitted to decide what was important.

The interview procedure evolved so that in its final form the interviewer gave a summary of the salient questions and issues at the beginning of each interview and then invited the respondent to comment. Notes were taken during the interview and each point was checked off as it was covered by the interviewee. Followup questions were used throughout the interview and to elicit observations about topics which were not previously discussed by the subject. At the end of the interview, the subject was asked to summarize and comment on the effect of the print media in the policy decision. Respondents generally did not distinguish among media unless they were asked to comment specifically about the differences between them.

With the subjects' permission, the interviews were tape recorded. Interviews of the key participants, including the Minister, his executive assistant, the deputy minister, the ATA president, her executive secretary, and three of the five journalists were transcribed in their entirety. The important portions of other interviews were transcribed. Particularly important were comments which had not been made by other participants. Quotations used in the study were sent to the respondents for verification of accuracy.

Throughout the research process, a journal was kept to record the reasoning behind each research decision and perceptions about the data. All summary notes, records of meetings, all documents, and rules and guidelines for interviews and data analysis were also kept. These form an "audit trail" which is available for use by other researchers or for examination by the thesis committee (Guba and Lincoln, 1982, pp. 247, 248; Owens, 1982, p. 13).

Data Analysis

The primary approach to data analysis was inductive. Inductive analysis, also called analytic induction (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982, pp. 65-68), is the inverse of conventional deductive analysis where data are usually analyzed on the basis of an a priori theory. Data were analyzed inductively in order to define working propositions for follow-up (Lincoln

and Guba, 1985, pp. 202-204). Gradually, through inductive analysis, conclusions were developed in a fashion similar to that suggested for the development of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

A theory, according to Silver (1983, p.6), is "a set of logically interrelated propositions." She indicates that when a "pattern of relationships among several constructs" can be articulated "clearly, logically, and convincingly," the expression of these relationships is called a proposition. A construct is a "blending or combining" of two or more concepts to form a "higher-order unit of thought." Concepts are the "smallest unit of analysis in the thought process" by which reality is interpreted.

Denzin (1978, pp. 59-67) suggests that since concepts are tentative ways of looking at reality, propositions "become tentative statements concerning the occurrence and interrelationhip of events." They give theory the "quality of explanation," representing "an advance beyond concept development" and permitting "the construction of deductive schemes."

As previously indicated, from a preliminary content analysis of the newspaper and magazine articles, propositional statements (which appear in the Appendix) were developed. These were tested with the respondents in interviews. As the interviews proceeded, the propositions were modified to fit new facts or eliminated where aspects of the case defied explanation by the proposition. Some additional propositions were added. Through the process of analysis and writeup, the propositions were further refined. Propositions were prepared for each chapter of findings. Propositions from Chapters 4, 5 and 6 were used in developing propositions in Chapter 7. These lead to conclusions about the central question which are reported in Chapter 8.

Analysis began during the interview process and continued after data collection during the writing stage. The following procedure, recommended by Bogdan and Biklen (1982, pp. 146-155) was followed during data collection: (a) decisions were made which narrowed the questioning; (b) questions were reformulated to direct and organize data

collection; (c) data collection was planned in light of previous observations; (d) comments were written about ideas and findings were frequently summarized; (e) new ideas and themes were tried out on the subjects; (f) findings were reviewed in light of the literature; (g) analysis was expanded by generalizing relations and happenings.

Following data collection, data were sorted (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982, pp. 156-162) by proposition and subject area. Further categorization and breakdown occurred according to the conclusions derived from the review of literature. Data display techniques, suggested by Miles and Huberman (1984, pp. 25-26), were used to map relationships among roles and groups, to graphically display critical events and actions, and to depict the most important independent and dependent variables in order to determine relationships among them. Descriptive and explanatory matrices were also used to display phenomena as they occurred chronologically, to bring together variables connected by theoretical ideas, to show the results or outcomes of processes and the forces in the setting.

As the data collection and analysis progressed, periodic discussions were held with colleagues, as a means of testing propositions and enhancing good judgment. In addition, data and interpretations were checked with several of the subjects (Guba and Lincoln, 1982, pp. 246, 247; LeCompte and Goetz, 1982, p. 42).

In writing up the case study, the aim was to develop description (Guba and Lincoln, 1982, p. 248; Owens, 1982, pp.7,8) that not only provided the facts or events in the case, but also the quality of the context as the participants in the situation experienced it. An effort was made to present a picture of the actual participants in context, to provide essential data in a focused, conversation-like format, to illuminate meanings by focusing on essential points, and to build on the "tacit knowledge" of readers, thus giving a sense of the actual substance of the case (Guba and Lincoln, 1982, pp. 371-377).

Trustworthiness

While LeCompte and Goetz (1982) retain the terms validity and reliability in their discussion of methodological rigor in ethnographic or qualitative research, Guba and Lincoln (1982; Lincoln and Guba, 1985) substitute credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as measures of trustworthiness in the naturalistic paradigm. It is these latter terms that are used to describe the techniques for assuring rigor in this inquiry.

Credibility

Credibility has to do with the degree of confidence in the findings of a particular inquiry. Primary concern is that "the data sources (most often humans) find the inquirer's analysis, formulations and interpretations to be credible (believable)" (Guba and Lincoln, 1982, p. 246).

To insure credibility, the followed techniques, suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1982, p. 247, Lincoln and Guba, 1985, pp. 301-316), have been incorporated into this study:

1. The investment of sufficient time to identify the important characteristics of both the context and the problem.

2. Persistence in order to identify those characteristics and elements in the situation that were most relevant to the problem and to allow focusing on them in detail.

3. Peer debriefing with fellow doctoral students to test working hypotheses and to enhance good judgment.

4. Triangulation or the use of multiple and different sources and methods, i.e., document analysis and interviews (Denzin, 1978; Jick, 1979; Mathison, 1988) to improve the probability that findings and interpretations were accurate.

5. Consideration of negative cases in an effort to refine propositions until they accounted for "all known cases without exceptions."

6. The maintaining of raw data (called referential adequacy) for later recall and comparison to preserve overtime the sense of context in which the observations were made (Owens, 1982, p. 15) and to permit the testing of interpretations for accuracy.

7. Member checks with respondents (also suggested by LeCompte and Goetz, 1982, p. 42) to assure that they agreed with the analysis and interpretations.

Transferability

Although the investigator cannot specify the generalizability of an inquiry, the use of description will allow anyone interested in making a transfer to reach conclusions about whether transferability is possible (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 316).

Theoretical or purposive sampling and description, both recommended by Guba and Lincoln (1982, p. 248), were used to facilitate transferability. Theoretical or purposive sampling was intended to maximize the range of information collected and to allow the conditions for the development of propositions. Description provided meaning to the context by imparting a vicarious experience of it and by permitting judgments about the transferability of hypotheses to other contexts. The aim in using description (Owens, 1982, pp. 7,8) was to go beyond mere information or descriptive data by conveying a literal description that figuratively transported the readers into the situation with a sense of insight, understanding, and illumination not only of the facts or events in the case, but also of the texture, the quality, and the power of the context as the participants in the situation experienced it.

Dependability

Dependability is considered synonymous with accuracy. Triangulation was used in this study to enhance dependability (Guba and Lincoln, 1982, p. 248; Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 316). In addition, an "audit trail" was provided to make it possible should someone desire to examine the procedures of the study in order to verify its adherence to professional research techniques and to make it possible to reproduce the study.

Confirmability

By insuring confirmability, the onus of objectivity of the study is removed from the inquirer and placed on the data (Guba and Lincoln, 1982, p. 247). To assure confirmability, this study used triangulation and provided a "reflexive journal" and the audit trail (Guba and Lincoln, 1982, p. 248; Lincoln and Guba, 1985, pp. 319, 320). The reflexive journal included the reasoning and logic behind each decision and the hunches, guesses, feelings and perceptions about the data. It forms part of the audit trail. If desired, the audit trail can assist someone in tracing findings back to the original data so as to assure that interpretations of data are reasonable and meaningful. In addition to the reflexive journal, the audit trail includes (a) the notes and observations from interviews, (b) summary notes, (c) records of meetings, (d) all documents, (e) guidelines and rules for content analysis of documents, (f) rules for categorizing data, and (g) interview guidelines (Owens, 1982, p.13).

Ethical Safeguards

This study followed ethical guidelines established by the University of Alberta General Faculties Council and by the Department of Educational Administration Research Ethics Review Panel. The application of guidelines was reviewed and approved by the panel. These guidelines deal with individual rights, informed consent, privacy and confidentiality and anonymity.

To protect individual rights, subjects were fully informed through letters and at the time of the interviews about the precise nature and purpose of the research so that they could withhold consent or limit comment. They were aware of the risks and benefits involved in participating in the research as well as their right to privacy and confidentiality. They were invited to contact the thesis committee chairman for more information.

Although written consent was not requested, each participant gave consent to be interviewed. They were explicitly told that their names would be used in the study unless they specifically requested otherwise. All subjects agreed that their names could be used.

By letters and at the time of the interviews, all subjects were asked for permission to tape record the interviews. All gave permission and were told that they would receive for review a transcript of quotes to be used in the study.

The right to privacy was protected. No information was requested or published about a person's physical or mental condition, personal circumstances or social relations which was not already in the public domain.

At no point in the study were subjects intentionally misled about the actual procedures and purposes of the project nor was essential information withheld from them. While the risks to the subjects were minimal, greater importance was attached to the welfare of the respondents than to any potential contribution of the research to the advancement of knowledge.

Summary

An eclectic approach was adopted for the study. Methods were selected on the basis of their potential for answering the central question of the investigation irrespective of their paradigmatic affinity. The viewpoint was mainly naturalistic, but also included elements of positivism, specifically dealing with causality. The largely qualitative methodology was supplemented by quantitative approaches. Interviews were the primary source of data, but these were supported by both qualitative and quantitative content analysis.

The basic design was a case study, because it enabled use of description to present not only the facts or events in the case, but also the context as the participants experienced it. From a content analysis of newspaper and magazine articles dealing with the case, propositions were developed which were tested and refined through interviews. Gradually, conclusions emerged related to print media coverage of this specific educational policy.

Trustworthiness was assured through techniques such as triangulation, member checks, and the provision of an audit trail. Ethical safeguards were established to fully inform and protect the respondents.

Chapter 4

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

A number of events had direct bearing on the formation of the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards. Moreover, the mass media coverage of these events heightened the interest of the media in covering COATS. Press coverage of these events also increased public awareness of the need for reviews of teacher performance and assured the Minister of Education that his decision to form the Council was right.

Negotiations for a new Teaching Profession Act began in earnest in the early 1970s, spurred on by the government's Policy Governing Future Legislation for the Professions and Occupations. Revisions of the Act were again considered in the early 1980s following the appointment of a new Minister. Then the dismissal and trial of Jim Keegstra for teaching racism contributed to mounting public concern about the evaluation of teacher competency. The Committee on Tolerance and Understanding was formed to examine this and other related matters. Concurrently, the Board of Teacher Education and Certification was disbanded. These events and newspaper coverage of them influenced the establishment of COATS and are examined in this chapter.

Basis of the Teaching Profession Act

The Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) was established through passage of the Teaching Profession Act (TPA) in 1935. The ATA became the negotiating arm of the teaching profession, with provisions to discipline its members for misconduct. In 1944 the Board of Teacher Education and Certification (BTEC) was formed apart from the ATA to advise the Minister of Education on matters of certification and teacher education. Neither the ATA nor BTEC had jurisdiction over matters of teacher performance.

Although the origins of the Alberta Teachers' Association date back to the First World War when it was known as the Alberta Teachers' Alliance, not until amendments to the Teaching Profession Act in 1936 was the potential for a strong organization created. In

1934, teachers voted overwhelmingly to support a Teaching Profession Bill which changed the name of the Alliance to the Alberta Teachers' Association. However, when the Bill passed through the legislature membership in the Association was not made mandatory. With the advent of the Social Credit government in 1935, newly-elected MLA Solon Low, a former teacher, piloted a Private Member's Bill through the Legislature which made membership in the Association mandatory for all Alberta teachers and assured the vitality of the organization.

In 1939 a Certification Committee was established with members from the Department of Education, the university and the teachers' organization. In 1944 it received statutory recognition through an order-in-council, becoming the Board of Teacher Education and Certification (ATA Members' Handbook, 1986, p. 12). Although this Board had responsibilities for teacher certification and training, it did not have a mandate for matters of teacher performance and evaluation. Nor did the ATA have responsibility for teacher performance. Its powers were limited by the Teaching Profession Act to discipline for misconduct (Revised Statutes of Alberta, 1980, Chap. T-3; Bosetti, Interview, March 27, 1987).

Under the Act the Annual Representative Assembly (ARA) was established as the governing body of the Association. The ARA, in turn, elects executive officers and a Provincial Executive Council (PEC) to handle the day-to-day matters of the organization. The ARA also amends the Standards of Professional Conduct and the Code of Ethics and passes discipline by-laws. These require approval by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council.[1] Examples of misconduct are: (a) taking steps to secure the dismissal of another teacher for reasons of animosity or personal gain, (b) circulating false reports about fellow

[1] Amendments proposed by the Annual Representative Assembly in 1977 and 1978 still have not been ratified by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council, an action which requires the Minister's recommendation. These amendments with a notation indicating they were not ratified as yet were included in the 1986 ATA Members' Handbook, but were removed from the 1987 Handbook, following the appointment of a new Minister.

teachers, (c) maliciously criticizing the work of other teachers, (d) bargaining on one's own for the group, (e) addictions to drugs or alcohol, and (f) conviction of an offence (ATA Members' Handbook, 1987, pp. 1, 113, 114).

In summary, through the Teaching Profession Act, the Alberta Teachers' Association was given responsibility for discipline of teachers for matters of misconduct. The formation of the Board of Teacher Education and Certification provided for certification and training. One area that was not covered by either was teacher competency or performance.

Early Unsuccessful Negotiations for a New Act

The ATA began lobbying for changes in the Teaching Profession Act in the late 1960s with the Association firstly requesting a role in teacher certification. This demand was expanded in the early 1970s to include powers related to evaluation of teacher performance. Newspaper coverage was both minimal and sporadic, but served to put the item on the public agenda. These efforts were held in abeyance during the operation of the Commission on Educational Planning and the Chichak Commission on Professions, which reported their findings in 1972 and 1973, respectively. Both recommended some teacher control of certification (Calgary Herald, August 17, 1973; Edmonton Journal, September 7, 1974; Report of the Commission on Educational Planning, 1972, pp. 136, 208, 244).

Teacher Efforts to Change the Act

Teachers renewed their efforts to gain changes in the Teaching Profession Act beginning in 1974. Articles about teacher self-governance began to appear more frequently in the press, numbering 10 in 1974 and 24 in 1975. Dr. Bernie Keeler, executive secretary of the ATA, indicated that teacher certification would be the ATA's main issue for 1974 (Edmonton Journal, January 2, 1974; Calgary Herald, January 3, 1974). At the Annual Representative Assembly delegates were split over the ATA's role in evaluating teacher performance, but a resolution eventually passed supporting the Association's request for

powers in this area. Opponents felt that the ATA's duty was to see teachers get "due process, not to act as a squad for putting teachers out of work" (Edmonton Journal, April 16, 1974). The ATA submitted a proposal to government, which was considered by the Cabinet Education Committee (Edmonton Journal, September 7, 1974; September 25, 1974; Calgary Albertan, November 7, 1974). But then opposition from the Alberta School Trustees' Association (ASTA) brought about a government delay and stymied the teachers' initiative (Edmonton Journal, November 28, 1974; Calgary Herald, November 29, 1974; Calgary Herald, February 14, 1975).

A government report in July 1975 recommended a greater role for the ATA by increasing its membership on the Board of Teacher Education and Certification from four on a 23-member board to seven on a 25-member board (Edmonton Journal, July 8, 1975). ATA reaction to the proposal was mixed, because it didn't give the Association full certification powers (Edmonton Journal, July 9, 1975; Calgary Herald, July 9, 1975). The Trustees opposed the greater role (Calgary Herald, July 16, 1975). Editorials during the period recommended caution about giving full certification power to the ATA. Although there are merits to the ATA having powers to certify teachers and review performance, wrote an editorial writer in the Calgary Albertan (July 21, 1975), the ATA is "still a political organization." The Calgary Herald's (July 21, 1975) position was that "sole control would go too far." With the coming of autumn a new issue began to preoccupy the news media -- student teacher practicum (Edmonton Journal, September 12, 13, 18, 23, 1975; Calgary Herald, September 13, 25, 1975). Teacher certification disappeared from the newspaper pages.

The next related newspaper coverage was in 1978, when the ATA brought six Edmonton administrators before its Discipline Committee for unprofessional conduct. They had disobeyed an ATA order by accepting term administrative positions (Edmonton Journal, February 17, March 27, June 8, 20, December 20, 1978). The Discipline Committee decision was eventually overturned, clearing the six administrators of

wrongdoing (Edmonton Journal, February 2, 9, 1979). This case was later cited as evidence of the Association's inability to handle both professional and union concerns (Edmonton Journal, March 31, 1981). During the same period the ASTA received newspaper coverage by claiming that school boards did not have the power to discipline teacher employees (Edmonton Journal, November 8, 25, 1978).

Policy Governing Professions and Occupations

During the 1978-79 legislation year, work on the Teaching Profession Act was delayed while waiting for the government paper "Policy Governing Future Legislation for the Professions and Occupations" (Derek G. Norton, Memorandum, May 31, 1978). The policy was finally tabled in the Legislature May 16, 1978. Alberta Education with other departments began re-examining their legislation in light of the policy statement (Peter Lougheed, Letter, January 2, 1979; Alberta Education, Response to the Policy, no date).

In 1978 the ATA sought to have its Code of Ethics and Standards of Professional Conduct incorporated under its discipline by-laws. It also pushed to have discipline by-laws, that were passed by the Annual Representative Assembly in 1972, 1973, 1975 and 1978, approved by order-in-council. In addition, the Association (Alberta Education, Response to Policy, no date, p. 2) wanted:

> 1. To remove [Provincial Executive] Council from the discipline process as much as possible to avoid all possibility of bias.
> 2. To retain authority in the Council to protect the profession and the interests of teachers and of the public in some circumstances.
> 3. To provide equality of access to the discipline process to all (both members and non-members)....

Minister of Education Julian Koziak was to take these changes before the Cabinet Committee on Social Planning, but following the judgment in favor of the six Edmonton school administrators "on February 9, 1979, these materials were returned to the Department with instructions to 'file until further notice."

No further action was taken at the time (Alberta Education, Response to the Policy, no date, p. 4) and following a provincial election, on March 23, 1979, Mr. Koziak was

replaced as Minister of Education by David King. A letter dated May 3, 1979 from the ATA to the Minister indicated that "since the competence by-laws were inoperable because of lack of government approval, the 1979 ARA rescinded them" (Alberta Education, Response to the Policy, no date, p. 6).

The decade of the 1970s saw the beginning of efforts on the part of both government and the ATA to make changes to the Teaching Profession Act. Changes were not enacted, partly because government lacked confidence in the ATA's ability to both defend and prosecute its members on matters of misconduct and teacher performance. Newspaper coverage of teacher performance and its regulation during the period was not significant, although it established the need for changes to teacher-governance as part of the public agenda. While earlier in the decade newspaper articles covered proposals for revisions to the Teaching Profession Act, during the latter period from 1975-1979, there was no indication in the press of the behind the scenes negotiations for a new Act.

Resumption of Negotiations for a New Act

With the appointment of David King as Minister of Education, negotiations for a new Teaching Profession Act began in earnest. However, Mr. King's style did not always meet with ATA approval and his efforts were frequently frustrated (Nadene Thomas, Interview, April 14, 1987). This section describes those efforts and the newspaper coverage of these attempts to revise the Teaching Profession Act.

ATA Rejection of 1981 Proposal

Beginning in 1981, negotiations for a new Teaching Profession Act were resumed when the Minister of Education proposed amendments which would establish a separate 21 member committee to handle professional concerns for teachers, leaving the ATA with only bargaining functions (Alberta Education, February 20, 1981). Eleven of the 21 members would be teachers. The ATA demanded the right to appoint the 11 teachers on the 21 member professional committee, while Mr. King wanted them elected by teachers-at-large.

The King proposal received support of the ASTA (Edmonton Journal, February 18, 1981), but was opposed by the ATA (Edmonton Journal, February 27, 1981).

Teachers threatened to "walkout" over the issue (Calgary Herald, March 3, 4, 6, 1981; Edmonton Journal, March 6, 1981) and ATA locals "besieged MLAs with warnings of the 'dire consequences' of the proposals" (Edmonton Journal, March 9, 1981). MLAs were often unable to respond to teacher questions (Edmonton Journal, March 31, 1981).

After several days of meetings, punctuated by numerous news reports, a press release was issued March 9, 1981 (Alberta Education News Release #11):

> After ten hours of joint meetings over the weekend, Education Minister David King and Alberta Teachers' Association President Mac Kryzanowski announced that substantial progress has been made toward resolving recent differences over proposals for the revision of the Teaching Profession Act. Both indicated that the meetings between Mr. King and the Provincial Executive Council of the ATA took place in a conciliatory spirit and a positive atmosphere.

Mr. King conceded the right of veto of any changes to the ATA, indicating that legislation would not proceed "to the stage of Royal Assent" in spring session, "unless the Executive Council of the ATA consider[ed] it appropriate" (Alberta Education, News Release #11, March 9, 1981; Edmonton Journal, March 9, 10, 1981; Calgary Herald, March 9, 12, 1981). The news release indicated that, because of the sensitive stage of the discussions, "no public statements of proposed content will be made until details are finalized."

Nevertheless, the news stories continued. The trustees, "angered" by King's "cave-in" to the ATA (Edmonton Journal, March 12, 1981), claimed they had little or no say in the process (Calgary Herald, March 14, 1981).

In a Calgary Herald column dated March 14, 1981, Catherine Butlin stated:

> Judging by the howls of protest from trustees and purrs of praise from teachers about King's latest ideas, it was Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) outcries over the first plan King put forward that won his ear.
>
> Perhaps it's because teachers had the most to lose from King's first proposal that they launched their attack on King's plans a lot more energetically than the Alberta School Trustees Association (ASTA) did.

After a further two weeks of negotiations, talks had reached an "impasse" and King dropped immediate plans for amendments to the Teaching Profession Act (Alberta Education, News Release #13, March 27, 1981; Edmonton Journal, March 25, 1981; Calgary Herald, March 27, 1981). The Minister and the ATA could not agree about how ATA members of the commission would be appointed (Alberta Education News Release #13, March 27, 1987).

In a letter to the Edmonton Sun (April 7, 1981), Mr. King wrote:

> Although many issues have been agreed upon, there are some areas still needing resolution. The delay in introducing legislation will allow us to continue the co-operative process. We are striving to develop a legislative package that is completely acceptable to the ATA and all other sections of the educational community.

Refining Drafts of the Act

During 1981 officials of Alberta Education reworked drafts of an amended Act. Finally, in August cabinet removed the Teaching Profession Act from the legislation to be introduced in the fall session, giving Department officials "at least until Spring of 1982 to complete a final draft" (Derek G. Norton, Memorandum, August 24, 1981). However, in November 1981, the Minister made a decision to go ahead with changes the following spring to the Board of Teacher Education and Certification (BTEC) rather than with amendments to the Teaching Profession Act (Alberta Education, Minutes of the Interdepartmental Committee on the Teaching Profession Act, November 5, 1981). Nevertheless, in February of 1982, a second draft of the Act was prepared for the Education Committee of Caucus along with a draft of a ministerial order concerning revisions to BTEC (S.N. Odynak , Memorandum to David King, February 4, 1982).

Negotiations to make changes to the Act did not get newspaper coverage during 1982, however Alberta Education continued to refine original drafts of a new bill in preparation for the fall sitting of the Legislative Assembly (William Duke, Memorandum to Steven N. Odynak, May 27, 1982). A draft of the 1982 bill, dated May 7, 1982 (Alberta

Education, Revisions to the Teaching Profession Act, Draft 4, 1982), suggested the establishment of a Professional Commission of the ATA. It was to have 21 members: 11 professional members, not chosen from the Provincial Executive Council of the ATA, but elected by the Annual Representative Assembly; and 10 members appointed by the Minister of Education, one nominated by the Alberta School Trustees' Association, one by the Conference of Alberta School Superintendents, four from the faculties of education, one employee of Alberta Education, one employee of Alberta Advanced Education, and two members of the public appointed by the Minister after consultation with the Council. As in previous drafts, the Commission was to assess and develop academic and experience requirements, evaluate and develop desirable standards of competence for certified teachers, and examine the practice of teaching generally. Even with the concession that teacher members should be elected from the ARA, the draft still did not make its way to the Legislative Assembly.

In summary, during the early 1980s the Minister's efforts to change the Teaching Profession Act were frustrated by the ATA as well as by the ASTA. In 1981, newspaper coverage of the controversy over proposed amendments was extensive, bringing the year's total to 27 items. The 1981 experience would serve as a dress rehearsal for what was to happen in 1985 with the announcement for the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards.

The Keegstra Affair and the Dissolution of BTEC

The end of 1982 brought to light an affair which was to affect greatly the views of the Minister regarding the need for a new Teaching Profession Act and of the public regarding the need for teacher reviews. Both provincially and nationally, it was also to become one of the best covered stories about teachers.

The Firing of Jim Keegstra

In December 1982 in the small Alberta community of Eckville, west of Red Deer, teacher Jim Keegstra was fired for teaching an anti-Semitic view of history. He claimed

there was no Holocaust and that Jews led a world conspiracy (Calgary Herald, December 8, 9, 1982; Edmonton Journal, December 9, 10, 1982). During the spring of 1983, the ATA put its energies toward a defense of Keegstra before the Board of Reference (Calgary Herald, March 19, 23, 24, 25, 29, 1983; Edmonton Journal, March 23, 24, 25, 26, 29, 1983). Keegstra's firing was upheld (Edmonton Journal, April 15, 1983), the judge warning of "scars" left on the students by Keegstra's teachings (Calgary Herald, April 18, 1983). The ATA claimed it "had no choice" in defending Mr. Keegstra (Edmonton Journal, April 17, 1983), thus leading to questions as to whether the ATA could both defend and bring complaints against its members (Edmonton Journal, April 21, 24, 1983). Finally the ATA issued a news release (April 20, 1984) explaining its position:

> For the last forty years, The Alberta Teachers' Association has provided legal assistance to teachers in Board of Reference cases. This ensures that all teachers have...due process of...law.... The Association's legal services are withheld only when the teacher's conduct has previously been the subject of an Association investigation that has proven grounds for non-support. In short, the teacher has a right to the "day in court," and the Association has an obligation to ensure that legal services are available so that the teacher's right is not abridged by lack of adequate defence. In the case of Keegstra, all this proceeded as it should.

Committee on Tolerance and Understanding

Extensive national and local attention in the mass media forced the Education Minister to take action. It also provided him an opportunity to pursue some longstanding goals in teacher evaluation. At the same time the ASTA began advocating a system of performance appraisals for teachers (Calgary Herald, October 19, 1983; Edmonton Journal, November 1, 1983) ; the ATA strengthened its Standards of Professional Conduct requiring that teachers teach "in a manner that respects the dignity and rights of all persons" (Calgary Herald, March 26, 1984).

Mr. King tried to by-pass the ATA in decertifying Keegstra (Edmonton Journal, April 19, 1983; Calgary Herald, April 19, 1983), but was unsuccessful. Then, in June 1983, Mr. King established the Committee on Tolerance and Understanding as a part of a

government effort to encourage greater tolerance and respect for others in Alberta schools. Chaired by former MLA Ron Ghitter, the committee was formed because of the government's "deep concern that a certified teacher in one of [the] public schools had been able to transmit, over an extended period of time, views that were clearly racially and religiously prejudiced" (Report of the Committee on Tolerance and Understanding, December 1984, p. 7). The committee recommended a model for the new Teaching Profession Act (p. 26) which would:

> set forward clear lines of responsibilities and action in matters dealing with professional standards (competence and ethics, certification and de-certification), policy and planning (Professional development standards, priorities and preservice), and professional development (specialist councils, inservice, conference and publications).

The "key provision" of the Committee's recommendations was the creation of a Board of Teacher Standards, with 15 members, eight to be elected from the membership of the ATA, five to be appointed by the Minister (two of whom were to be involved in teacher training, one to represent the Department, and two from the public at large) and two to be elected by the members of the ASTA (p.28).

Ron Ghitter, chairman of the Committee on Tolerance and Understanding, described the impact of the Keegstra affair in a speech to the ASTA convention November 29, 1983 in Calgary (Edmonton Journal, February 1, 1984). The speech was quoted verbatim, as follows:

> In my view, Eckville exposed serious gaps in our educational system.
> In my view, Eckville illustrated an institutionalization of our educational system which has made it unresponsive and keeps it from acting in a responsive, expeditious manner....
> In my mind, Eckville raises again the question of teacher evaluation.
> In my mind, Eckville raises again the question of the role of the principal in our school system.
> In my mind, Eckville raises again the question of the code of ethics of the Alberta Teachers' Association.
> Eckville again raises the question of the professionalism within the Alberta Teachers' Association, and the procedures utilized in this province with respect to discipline of teachers, termination of teachers, and the whole process of teacher standards, the encouragement and rewarding of teachers with merit, and the ridding from our system of teachers who are incompetent.
> Eckville again raises the question of curriculum and the difficulty of

> expunging from our curriculum books and resource material that tends to encourage discrimination and create negative models of any group in our society.
>
> Eckville again raises the issue of the need for more adequate teacher training in dealing with the multicultural mosaic that exists in our schools, to assist our teachers in coping with prejudice when it arises within the classroom.

Teacher Evaluation

With the introduction of the Management and Finance Plan in January 1984, Mr. King formulated an evaluation policy, whereby local jurisdictions became responsible to evaluate teachers regularly (Edmonton Journal, April 13, 1984; Alberta Education, Management and Finance Plan Program Policy Manual, May 2, 1984). Results of evaluations were not only to assist professional development and to improve teacher performance, but also to allow "appropriate action with respect to teachers whose performance is unacceptable."

Need for a New Act

The need for a revised Teaching Profession Act took on new importance with the publicity about Mr. Keegstra in 1982 and 1983. On June 30, 1983, Mr. King (Ministerial Request for Legislation, Teaching Profession Amendment Act, 1983, dated June 30, 1983) submitted to cabinet a ministerial request for legislation, asking for fall introduction and spring enactment of a Teaching Profession Amendment Act. The timeline would "allow for greater input from the profession." But again, a revised Act was not introduced into the Legislature.

Dissolution of BTEC

In September 1983, Education Minister Dave King caught both the ATA and the ASTA by surprise when he dissolved the Board of Teacher Education and Certification, citing inefficiency as the reason. "Rather than attempting to restructure this existing board, it is a more productive procedure to reconsider current needs and develop a replacement to meet these needs" (Calgary Herald, September 22, 1983; Alberta Education, News

Release, September 21, 1983).

The ATA claimed King was seeking "more control over who can teach in the province's schools." A member of the executive council speculated that King was reacting to ATA opposition to efforts to decertify Mr. Keegstra. "There's a process you follow but I think King figures the process is too slow. He wants to change it," said the council member (Calgary Herald, September 22, 1983).

"Education Minister Dave King has stunned the top levels of Alberta's educational establishment by abruptly wiping out the provincial certification board. I know of no educator who had an inkling in advance of such drastic surgery," wrote Glenn Martin in a column in the Edmonton Journal (October 9, 1983). He applauded Mr. King's approach to education innovation:

> He shoots from the lip, and he is either the worst of the best thing to happen in years to provincial education.
>
> Which? In balance, he may be the best. Mr. King's great asset as education minister is that he knows so little about education. If he knew even a smidgen more, he would know that one simply can't do the things he does. Instead, he just goes ahead and does them -- like mandated provincial exams, the school computers, the study on bias, and now annihilating BTEC.
>
> Being expert in education means cherishing moderation in all things, appreciating the glacial slowness of institutional and professional change. Mr. King understands none of that. He doesn't see why Alberta can't simply have better education, so he charges ahead with rash and timely actions.

With the order-in-council disbanding the Board of Teacher Education and Certification, responsibilities of the Board were turned over to the Minister of Education (Ministerial Order, dated September 20, 1983).

Earlier at the September 13, 1983 meeting of BTEC, Mr. King had indicated that he expected "on or shortly after" January 1, 1984 to "re-establish some successor organization to the BTEC." The successor organization would have new terms of reference on matters such as teacher competency and have a new composition and relationship to the Minister of Education. Further, Mr. King said:

> There exists in Alberta today a great window of opportunity for constructive leadership in the area of teacher education and certification and ... the next

> three years will be action oriented in many areas... teacher competency, development models for teacher training programs, computer technology, and procedures for the certification and decertification of teachers (Alberta Education, Minutes of BTEC Meeting, September 13, 1983).

In spite of the significance of this move, there was little media coverage other than the three articles mentioned previously.

ATA Alternative to BTEC

The ATA had been preparing recommendations for replacement of the Board when it was dissolved. In September, the Association suggested an 11-person board with the following membership: two from Alberta Education (one to act as chairman), one from Alberta Advanced Education, two from the ASTA, three from the Alberta Teachers' Association, one from each of the three universities with faculties of education (Julius S. Buski, Letter to Melvin Fenske, October 18, 1983).

In responding to the ATA submission, Mr. King wrote:

> I have reviewed again ... the brief you submitted... as well as the several submissions made by your Association on the subject [of the Teaching Profession Act] over the past several years.
>
> I concur with your view that your Association has come under criticism because of shortcomings in the Teaching Profession Act. Frankly, I do not regard the proposed amendments outlined in ... the brief as representing substantial improvement.
>
> After having given the matter careful consideration, it is my view that the series of amendments proposed or even a further series of amendments will not correct basic deficiencies in the Act when viewed in the context of the Policy Governing Legislation for the Professions and Occupations.
>
> On the other hand, I believe that a new Teaching Profession Act could deal very effectively with deficiencies in the current legislation (Letter to Art Cowley, ATA President, November 2, 1983).

ASTA College of Teachers

In December 1983, the Alberta School Trustees' Association (ASTA, Proposal for "A College of Teachers of the Province of Alberta," December 1983, Calgary Herald, January 26, April 2, 1984; Edmonton Journal, February 24, 1984) submitted a proposal to the Minister suggesting a "College of Teachers" to replace the recently disbanded Board of Teacher Education and Certification. With regard to the teaching profession, the ASTA

position was summarized as "a desire for the professionalization of teaching, a belief that the nature of the practitioner-client relationship[2] limits the extent of professional autonomy, and a conviction that there should be lay participation in the governance of the teaching profession" (ASTA Proposal, 1983, p. 1).

The college was to be empowered to govern and regulate the practice of teaching through (a) the establishment of the standards of admission to the profession, (b) the certification, review of teaching practice and discipline of members, (c) the evaluation of all teacher credentials, (d) the definition and maintenance of professional standards, and (e) the continuing education of members (ASTA Proposal, 1983, p. 3).

A council of 13 members to be elected or appointed was to govern the college. Ten would be registered practitioners, of whom three would be nominated from the faculties of education, six elected by the registered membership, and one nominated by the Minister. Two non-practitioners would be appointed by the primary employers of teachers, and one non-practitioner would be appointed from the general public (ASTA Proposal, 1983, pp. 3, 4). The college would be separate from the union collective bargaining aspect.

Alberta Education Initiatives

About the same time as the ATA and the ASTA were presenting their proposals, the Department officials were contemplating changes to the Teaching Profession Act, but then suggested changes met with resistance from the ATA. Deputy Minister Reno Bosetti complained in a memo to his assistant deputy, Dr. Melvin Fenske (February 15, 1984):

> Mr. King, Sandra Smith, and I met with the ATA with respect to initiating a review of the Teaching Profession Act. Although some progress was made, we were disappointed to learn that the Association (through the committee with whom we met) remained inflexible with respect to several matters including our expectation that the ATA representation on the professional commission would be elected from members-at-large.

In view of the possibility that a new Teaching Profession Act would not be

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[2]Teachers were described as "public employees with a captive clientele."

introduced at the upcoming session of the legislature, Dr. Fenske was commissioned to prepare a proposal for the replacement of BTEC, "possibly using some of the ASTA ideas in their proposal for a teachers' college."

Soon after Mr. King submitted a proposal for a College of Alberta Teachers to the Education Committee of Caucus (David King, Memorandum to Myrna Fyfe, MLA, chairman of the Education Caucus Committee, no date). He recommended an 11-member College to be appointed by the Minister of Education. Six members would be practicing teachers, one nominated by the ATA and five selected from the ATA membership. The other five members would be appointed one each from Alberta Education, from the faculties of education, from the superintendents of schools, from the school trustees and from the public-at-large.

In summary, in spite of the Minister's continuing inability to achieve changes in the Teaching Profession Act, much had happened in the one year from the fall of 1982 to the fall of 1983. Publicity about the Keegstra affair had sensitized the public to the need for regulation of teacher performance. A "window of opportunity" had opened permitting Mr. King to introduce teacher evaluations and making it possible for him to disband the Board of Teacher Education and Certification. Mr. King, who had hoped to see the BTEC functions incorporated into a new Act, was able to dissolve the 40-year-old BTEC with little public fanfare and with few protests from the interest groups. The Alberta School Trustees' Association (ASTA) was more interested in gaining support for its own proposal for revisions to the Act in the form of a College of Teachers. Although the Alberta Teachers' Association had proposed an alternative to BTEC, it resisted most efforts by the Minister to revise the Teaching Profession Act.

Post-BTEC Negotiations for a New Act

In the year following the dissolution of the Board of Teacher Education and Certification (BTEC), efforts to get a new Teaching Profession Act intensified. At one

point, the Minister and the ATA came to agreement, but their plans were vetoed by the trustees. These negotiations occurred outside of the public view and away from media scrutiny.

Media Unawareness

Although there was considerable coverage of matters related to teacher performance, the media were unaware of the efforts to get a new Act. News coverage focused on teacher evaluation (Edmonton Journal, January 23, 26, February 9, April 13, 16, 19, 1984), on a plan for recertification put forth by the deans of education (Edmonton Journal, May 7, 8, 10, 1984; Edmonton Sun, May 8, 1984; Calgary Herald, May 8, 1984; Red Deer Advocate, May 9, 1984; Grande Prairie Herald-Tribune, May 10, 1984) and the internship of new teachers (Edmonton Journal, October 3, 1984; Edmonton Sun, October 3, 1984; Calgary Herald, October 3, 6, 12, 1984).

On April 3, 1984, Art Cowley, president of the Alberta Teachers' Association, sent a letter to Mr. King, indicating that the Provincial Executive Council on March 16 had indicated its "readiness to proceed expeditiously with negotiations for a new Teaching Profession Act," and outlining three essential aspects on which "we perceive informal agreement to have been reached." Those aspects were (1) the continuation of a single organization, the ATA, to which all teachers would belong, to represent "the collective view of Alberta teachers in matters of public policy," (2) the continuation of all current ATA functions under the purview of the Provincial Executive Council except for "the merging of teacher qualifications with the certification function" and "the judicial aspect of discipline cases," and (3) the continuation of the right of the ATA to bargain on behalf of its members.

By this time the government was preparing its fifth draft of a new Teaching Profession Act (E.A. McAra, Memorandum to Sandra Smith, March 13, 1984; Reno Bosetti, Memorandum to David King, March 23, 1984). A response to the ATA's letter of

April 3, 1984 (Notes from Meeting No. 1 on the Teaching Profession Act, April 8, 1984) expressed the following government position:

> While we are in agreement that there will be a single corporate entity representing teachers in the Province of Alberta, it would be inappropriate for a piece of professional legislation to establish one body as "the exclusive official representative of Alberta teachers at the provincial, national, and international levels."

A further paragraph suggested the thinking of government about the ATA role in collective bargaining:

> It is not the intention of Government to address collective bargaining matters in professional legislation other than to ensure that the role of the ATA and its locals in bargaining matters does not interfere with the role of the ATA in the conduct of matters of professional concern.

The response noted the objectives of the Minister in revising the Teaching Profession Act as a commitment "to the establishment of rigorous academic standards for entry (registration) into the profession;" "to the establishment of rigorous performance standards for continuation of registration," and "to discipline its members."

To achieve these goals, the Minister recommended: (a) the creation of one corporate body, the ATA, with the Annual Representative Assembly as its primary governing body; (b) legislation in two parts, one dealing with the role, responsibilities of a "professional commission," the other dealing with the role and responsibilities of the Provincial Executive Council; (c) continuation of the Council membership as present with the Commission reflecting the membership at large, the academic community and the public;[3] (d) both Council and the Commission have separate administrative roles, each with its own staff, budget and resources; and (e) the combining of competency matters and conduct matters under the regulation of the Commission.

Ministerial Request for Legislation

When on April 18, 1984, Mr. King (Ministerial Request for Legislation, Teaching

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[3] The Commission was not to become an arm of the Council or simply a Practice Review board; it would "not only be independent of Council but be seen to be independent."

Profession Act, April 18, 1984) sent a request for legislation to cabinet asking for spring introduction and enactment with a high priority the proposed legislation reflected these objectives and concerns. This draft of the proposed act provided for "a clear separation of the professional function from the economic function of the ATA." The Teachers' Association would continue as the sole corporate entity, with the Representative Assembly of the ATA as the governing authority.

Through a separate Professional Commission, teachers would establish the academic and experiential standards for entry into the profession, would provide certification, would establish performance standards for continuation of certification, and would discipline.

The Professional Commission would consist of 15 members, eight from the profession. Of these eight two would be elected from the Annual Representative Assembly, one would be the immediate past president of the association, and five would be teachers, not members of the Executive Council, elected in accordance to Council by-laws to represent geographic districts. The Minister would appoint one person nominated by the Alberta School Trustees' Association, one person nominated by the Conference of Alberta School Superintendents, two persons representing university faculties of education, one employee of Alberta Education, and two members from the public.

Certification and decertification would be transferred to the Professional Commission from the Minister. This would mean the move of the Registrar and his office out of Alberta Education. Discipline matters would be transferred from the Association to the Professional Commission.

Agreement between Minister and ATA

A draft of the Bill was prepared as a result of negotiations on April 27, 1984. Then the ATA prepared a revision of this draft of the Bill (April 30, 1984), which was "based on principles agreed to between the Minister and Association representatives." This draft

suggested a Bargaining Commission, directly responsible to the Annual Representative Assembly and separate from the Executive Council. Executive Council would have responsibility for a Board of Teacher Standards and a Practice Review Committee.

The Board of Teacher Standards would consist of eight members of the teaching profession, including the immediate past president of the Association and seven professional members who are not members of the Council. The Minister would appoint the other seven members, one each from the Alberta School Trustees' Association, from the Conference of Alberta School Superintendents, and Alberta Education, two each from the universities and from the public. The Board would be responsible for "the assessment and development of academic standards and experience requirements" for certification, for "the evaluation and development of desirable standards of competence," and for "the practice of teaching generally."

The Practice Review Committee would be comprised of five members, four teachers appointed by the Executive Council and one member of the public appointed by the Minister. The Committee would be responsible for conducting review of professional members in accordance with the Act and with Council regulations.

A draft dated May 1, 1984, went back to the concept of a separate Executive Council and Professional Commission. Two professional members of the Commission, who are not members of Council, would be elected by the Representative Assembly, a third would be the past president of the Association, and five others, who are not members of the Council, would be elected in accordance with the Council regulations from teachers in the five geographic districts of the province. A Peer Review Board of five members would be responsible to the Commission. Both the Minister and the ATA agreed to this draft.

Although the Minister and the ATA had come to agreement on a new Teaching Profession Act, objections from the Alberta School Trustees' Association prevented further action on the bill. E.J. (Ernie) Sehn, president of the ASTA, wrote (Letter to David King, May 23, 1984):

> I believe trustees appreciate your confidence that legislation can protect the commission of professional educators from undue influence by the welfare dimension of the Alberta Teachers' association. I think it is also fair to say their paranoia stems from experience over the last decade in which the A.T.A. has become increasingly more militant in subjugating professional matters to welfare concerns.
>
> I firmly believe that trustees objected to the amalgamation of the professional commission and the welfare activities of the present Alberta teachers' association; not so much from a need to limit the power of the association in negotiations and other welfare activities but, rather, from the need to see the profession of education take a significant step forward and, indeed, provide a leadership role in respect to pedagogy. Certainly, the discussion around the subject of our proposal for a teachers' college has been entirely on the positive side and motivated from a need to see major advances in the practice of teaching in this province.
>
> We appreciate your decision not to table legislation for the revision of the Teaching Profession Act during the present sitting of the legislature. I assure you that our Association and its members will use the time, which is now available, to develop a positive and constructive lobby. Further, I would like to assure you of our full and complete co-operation wherever we can be of assistance in the development of "appropriate" legislation....

Continuing Efforts of the Department

Department officials continued to meet with ATA staff and in August met with the ASTA officials. At that meeting the ASTA "emphasized the importance of maintaining a separation between" professional matters and bargaining matters, and requested membership on the ATA Executive Council if there was not a separation of functions (John McIsaac, Notes, August 30, 1984).

In October 1984 Alberta Education officials prepared 18 principles to govern the formulation of new legislation (John McIsaac, Memorandum to James S. Hrabi, October 18, 1984). The following are excerpts from those 18 principles:

> 6. Teachers are the best qualified and best able to have the major say in the professional development of their programs, the certification and the decertification of the membership, and the regulation of competency and ethics within the Teaching Profession....
> 7. A new Teaching Profession Act should reflect a commitment to the establishment of rigorous performance standards for initial procurement of registration and for continuation of registration of Association members.
> 10. Whatever body of the Association performs the professional function, it must be publicly perceived as being independent of the Alberta Teachers' Association's role in labour matters and should not be perceived as an extension of the Provincial Executive Council....
> 11. Where the separation of the professional functions and the bargaining

> functions is complete, ASTA membership in the agencies of the ATA is not necessary.
> 12. Whatever entities represent the separation of responsibilities within the Act, neither should control the regulation and by-law making power of the other and regulations of either entity must be subject to the ultimate authority of the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

Also, in October Dr. Bosetti indicated to Dr. N.E. Wagner, chairman of the Universities Co-ordinating Council (October 23, 1984), that they were "hopeful that a new Teaching Professional Act can be achieved in the not too distant future," thus making an alternative arrangement for getting outside advice about teacher certification unnecessary. In December Mr. King met with the executive of the ATA and left convinced that the ATA was "not interested in pursuing a new Teaching Profession Act " (David King, Letter to Nadene Thomas, December 18, 1984). Concern about progress in negotiating a new Act prompted Alberta Education officials to meet in later December to discuss a replacement for the Board of Teacher Education and Certification (James S. Hrabi, Memorandum, December 20, 1984).

ATA Discontent with Process

On January 18, 1985, Mr. King met with the ATA and other stakeholders. ATA officials left the meeting with the impression that the Minister had agreed that they "should take a leadership role in advising the Minister on teacher education and certification matters" (ATA Chronology of Council on Alberta Teaching Standards Events, May 17, 1985). They left the meeting agreeing to establish the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education (ACOTE). In early March the ATA executive invited stakeholders to name members to ACOTE.

In February, Nadene Thomas, president of the ATA (Letter to David King, February 11, 1985), indicated that the ATA could not "proceed to develop a new act" under the condition of having "to secure ... the acquiescence " of the ASTA. She further wrote:

> I met with Ernie Sehn on several occasions, including once with you. Our two groups of Table Officers met together. We have exchanged further correspondence. While progress was made, final positions were reached which seem irreconcilable. At the same time, we have continued the process

> of consultation with our membership and we discern there is a distinct hardening of views. The crucial question, as I know you realize, is the degree of separation or isolation of the bargaining function from the other aspects of the Association. From our discussions, it now appears that the degree of separation reflected in "Draft 2A" [April 30, 1984 draft] is not enough to satisfy the ASTA's present position and, at the same time, is too much to sit well with our members.
>
> Naturally I am disappointed that our efforts have not been crowned with success. There comes a point, however, when it is necessary to abandon, for a time, the striving for the ultimate and to pay attention to shorter-range goals. We would, therefore, like to meet with you as soon as possible to discuss the possibility of limited revisions to our existing act. [4]

During 1984, it looked as if a new Act might become a reality. The Minister and the ATA agreed on legislation which would give responsibility for professional matters to the ATA. However, the trustees rejected the proposal. Mr. King could have gone ahead, but he correctly recognized that he required their support to get the legislation approved in caucus. As local politicians, many of the trustees were members of the Conservative Party. Efforts to get a Teaching Profession Act with jurisdiction over teacher competency once again were frustrated.

Summary

Negotiations for a new Teaching Profession Act had passed through many stages since the ATA began lobbying for control of teacher certification and evaluation of performance in the late 1960s. The Alberta Teachers' Association had been very close to achieving its major demand for a unicameral organization, with control of both bargaining and professional functions. Mr. King's first proposal for a new Act in 1981 was for two separate organizations. By 1984, he had accepted the ATA position. The only impediment stopping passage of a new Act was ASTA objections. As chief rivals of the ATA at the negotiating table, the trustees feared what they saw as an increase in ATA power. The ATA in its discipline of members had shown a tendency to protect its self-interests (as in its

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[4]On April 19, 1984, the ATA submitted amendments to the Teaching Profession Act . These amendments to the general bylaws of the association had been approved by the Annual Representative March 29, 1984 and dealt with the election of officers. The ATA hoped to change the Act bit-by-bit through amendments while the minister continued to hope for a new Act.

prosecution of the six Edmonton administrators). In the minds of many, questions remained about the ability of a single organization to both prosecute and defend its members.

Since King first fought with the ATA over the Teaching Profession Act in 1981, there had been little media coverage of progress toward a new Act. Coverage in 1982 and 1983, relating to teacher competence dealt mainly with Keegstra's dismissal for teaching hatred of Jews. In late 1983 and in 1984, although there was some publicity about the ASTA proposal for a College of Teachers, the bulk of media coverage dealt with items peripherally related to the Act, such as teacher evaluation, recertification and internship.

Although press coverage of teacher competence issues was at times minimal and was overall sporadic and incomplete, it served a purpose of increasing public awareness of the need for practice review of teachers. Particularly important was the Keegstra coverage which stands as an aberration in comparison to the typically sparse reporting of educational issues. This coverage and that given. Keegstra's trial which ran concurrently with the public debate about the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards bolstered Mr. King's view that a review mechanism was needed (Bosetti, Interview, March 27, 1987; Nadene Thomas, Interview, April 14, 1987; Rich Vivone, Interview, March 24, 1987).

An article in the Calgary Herald, dated October 18, 1984, quoted Ron Ghitter, chairman of the Committee for Tolerance and Understanding, who warned teachers and trustees to "solve their political differences over the issue of self-governance for the Alberta Teachers' Association." Otherwise, the government would do it for them, he said.

Ghitter's warning went unheeded. With Nadene Thomas's letter in February 1985 stating the unwillingness of the ATA to negotiate further, the table had been set for introduction of the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards. And the media had not even prepared for the banquet. Although they knew about some of the issues, they were unaware of the lengthy negotiations and positions which led up to the announcement of the establishment of the Council.

Propositions

The events and information described in this chapter suggest the following propositions about the relationship of the mass media and the policy making process.

Proposition 1. Prior news coverage establishes an issue on the public agenda and once on the public agenda, the issue becomes more important to the political agenda.

News coverage of teacher competence issues during the years prior to the formation of COATS served to establish the issues on the public agenda. Reporting, particularly the firing of Jim Keegstra, heightened public concern about teacher conduct in classrooms as well as the view that teacher evaluation was necessary. The coverage and its effect on the public pushed the issue higher onto the Minister's agenda. While the literature deals with the importance of the media in setting both the public and the political agendas, there seems to be little written about the indirect effect of media coverage through the public on the political agenda.

Proposition 2. The mass media consider conflict and controversy as a major criteria for newsworthiness.

It is evident by the stories the media cover and those they do not that they consider conflict and controversy newsworthy. For example, the ATA's rejection of the Minister's proposals for a new Teaching Profession Act in 1981 and Keegstra's firing in 1982-1983 were both stories containing dramatic elements of conflict and controversy so these stories received good coverage. On the other hand, because stakeholder groups protested little over the dissolution of BTEC, there was little coverage in the news media. Although conflict and controversy are identified in the literature as only one of many criteria for covering an issue, it is obvious from this early coverage of teacher competence issues that they were a major reason for coverage in this case.

Proposition 3. Stories lack continuity in coverage because the news media generally are not proactive in developing stories but rather wait for events or reactions from sources.

Because the ASTA went to the news media with its proposal for a College of Teachers and because the ATA took its protests over the 1981 amendments to the Teaching Profession Act to the media, these stories received coverage. However, most of the coverage of the negotiations for a new Teaching Profession Act received little coverage because the participants did not go to the press with the story. This corroborates claims that much of what government does is left uncovered while journalists report the more obvious stories and those which are easier to research.

Proposition 4. The news media will consider an issue important if it has been covered previously.

Although coverage was inconsistent, the debate over the establishment of COATS would become more newsworthy because teacher competence issues had been established as a continuing story. This is consistent with the requirement for newsworthiness where stories are important because they have "significance for the past and the future." Because an issue has been covered in the past, editors are more likely to give it future consideration. The story of COATS had past implications on which to tie future stories.

Chapter 5

CONTENT ANALYSIS OF MEDIA COVERAGE

This chapter provides a content analysis of 171 print media items about the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards beginning with the announcement of the Council on March 29, 1985 until the Council began work in August 1985. The items were taken from Alberta daily and weekly newspapers, from Alberta Report, the province's only weekly news magazine, and from the Toronto Globe and Mail, a daily newspaper circulated nationally. Daily newspapers were classified as either large city dailies or small city dailies. Clippings were gathered from the Alberta Legislature Library, from the Communication Branch of Alberta Education, and from the Alberta Teachers' Association.

The "article" technique of content analysis was used because it is "easily and quickly" applied to both volume and slant of news and editorial content (Windhauser and Stempel, 1979, p. 152). Each newspaper item served as a unit of analysis. Each was identified by date, by publication, by sources, by kind, by location, by length, and by viewpoint. In addition, a brief summary of the contents was prepared for each item.

Articles were quantified at a nominal level by counting frequency of occurrence as a percentage of the total under the classification schemes. The frequency counts were cross-tabulated to make comparisons between variables. Content summaries were used to prepare a sequence of events and to enhance the trustworthiness of conclusions from the quantified data.

The analysis is reported under categories of period, of publication, of source, of kind of item, of location, of length, and of viewpoint. The write-up of each category concludes with propositions which were derived from the analysis.

Division into Periods

Content summaries of the items suggested that coverage of the public debate of the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards fell into three periods. Each period was distinguished by different events. Moreover, the kind and frequency of coverage varied somewhat during the periods. Each period was also characterized by lulls in coverage, much like punctuation marks, beginning or ending a period. These divisions were verified by participants in interviews.

Period 1, which included 106 items, accounted for 62 percent of the coverage. It began with the announcement of the Council on March 29 and lasted until the first serious negotiations took place during the week prior to April 30. It was a period of confrontation between the Minister and the ATA with almost daily print media coverage. Then, for a period of almost a week, there was practically no daily coverage, while the ATA Executive Council considered the Minister's proposals.

Forty-two items (24.6 percent) were published during Period 2 from May 1 to June 18, 1985, 32 in the first two weeks of May, nine during the rest of May, and only one in the first 18 days of June. It began with the renewal of the public confrontation between the Minister and the ATA. However, soon the news pages became silent as the ATA consolidated its position, using other means rather than the news media to reach teachers and to make its viewpoint heard in government. Also, during the latter part of the period, negotiations began between the parties and the media seem to gradually lose interest in the story.

Period 3 from June 19 to August 1, 1985 was a period of reconciliation from the announcement of a compromise on June 19 until the Council began work in August. Twenty-three items (13.5 percent) were published, only four in July.

Summary

In the COATS case, coverage varied depending on events, willingness of sources to speak to the press, and media interest in the story. Lulls in reporting, much like punctuation marks, provided natural beginnings and endings to periods of coverage.

Proposition 5. The amount of news coverage is not consistent over the duration of lengthy public debate.

Publications

The publications analyzed included nine provincial daily newspapers, four from the large cities of Calgary and Edmonton, and five from smaller Alberta cities. In addition, items were analyzed from Alberta Report, the province's only weekly news magazine, from the national Toronto Globe and Mail, and from weekly newspapers. Figure 5.1 shows the number of items per publication.

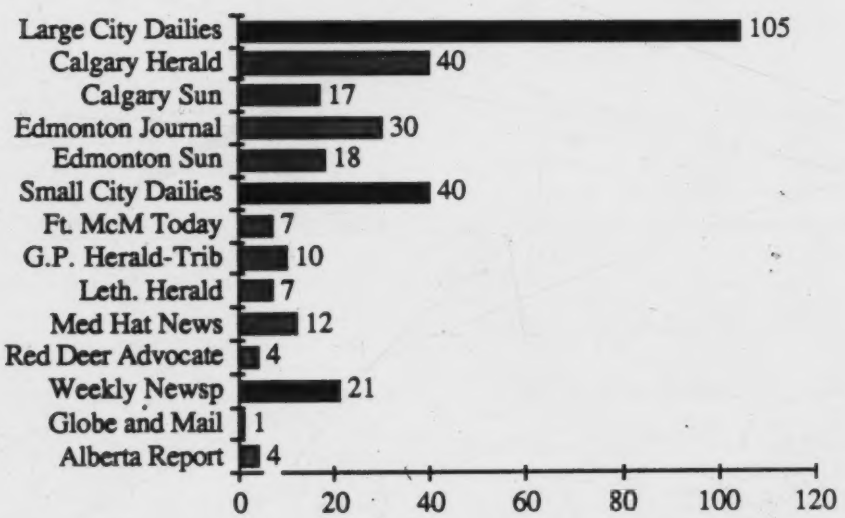

Figure 5.1. Number of Items per Publication

Number of Items by Publication and by Period

As shown in Table 5.1, the large city dailies carried the majority of print coverage, 105 items or 61.4 percent, indicating that the issue received greater coverage in the large cities than in the smaller cities and rural areas. Each of the four publications in this category printed more items than any other publication. Southam's Calgary Herald printed 40 items

Table 5.1

Number of Items by Publication and by Period

	Period 1		Period 2		Period 3		Total	
Publication	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Large City Dailies	71	67.6	23	21.9	11	10.5	105	61.4
Calg Herald	25	62.5	12	30.0	3	7.5	40	23.4
Calg Sun	15	88.2	1	5.9	1	5.9	17	9.9
Edm Journal	18	60.0	7	23.3	5	16.7	30	17.5
Edm Sun	13	72.2	3	16.7	2	11.1	18	10.5
Small City Dailies	24	60.0	6	15.0	10	25.0	40	23.4
Ft. M Today	3	42.9	2	28.6	2	28.6	7	4.1
Gr P Her-Trib	8	80.0			2	20.0	10	5.8
Leth Herald	4	57.1	1	14.3	2	28.6	7	4.1
M H News	7	58.3	1	8.3	4	33.3	12	7.0
R D Advocate	2	50.0	2	50.0			4	2.3
Weekly Newspapers	8	38.1	12	57.1	1	4.8	21	12.3
Globe and Mail	1	100.0					1	.6
Alberta Report	2	50.0	1	25.0	1	25.0	4	2.3
TOTAL	106	62.0	42	24.6	23	13.5	171	100.0

(23.4 percent), the most items of any provincial daily, and as many items as all of the small city dailies combined. The Edmonton Journal, also a Southam paper, was second with 30 items (17.5 percent), followed by the Edmonton Sun with 18 items (10.5 percent) and the Calgary Sun with 17 items (9.9 percent). Table 5.1 shows that 71 of the items (67.6 percent) in large city dailies were published in Period 1, 23 (21.9 percent) in Period 2, and 11 (10.5 percent) in Period 3. The first coverage occurred the day of the announcement March 29, 1985 in the Edmonton Journal.

The five small city dailies published 40 items (23.4 percent). This group was led by the only other Southam newspaper in the province, the Medicine Hat News with 12 items (7.0 percent). This was followed by Grande Prairie Herald-Tribune with 10 items (5.8 percent), and then by the Ft. McMurray Today and the Lethbridge Herald, a Thomson paper, with 7 each (4.1 percent). Finally, the Red Deer Advocate carried 4 items (2.3 percent). Twenty-four of the items (60 percent) in small city dailies were published in Period 1, six (15 percent) in Period 2, and 10 (25 percent) in Period 3. The first coverage of the issue in small city dailies was in the Medicine Hat News and the Lethbridge Herald on March 30, 1985, one day after the announcement of the Council.

Twenty one items (12.3 percent) were analyzed from 11 of the approximately 100 weekly newspapers. More items may have been published, but were not included in the clipping files. The publications included the Barrhead Leader (3 items), the Grimshaw North Peace Pictorial (2), the High River Times (1), the Lacombe Globe (2), the Peace River Record Gazette (1), the Raymond Review (2), the St. Albert Gazette (3), the Sherwood Park News (1), the Stettler Independent (2), the Wetaskiwin News Advertiser (1), and the Wetaskiwin Times (3). Eight of the weekly newspaper items were published in Period 1, 12 in Period 2, and one in Period 3. The issue was about three weeks old before the first coverage in weeklies occurred on April 17, 1985.

Four items (2.3 percent) were analyzed from Alberta Report and one item was analyzed from the Toronto Globe and Mail (.6 percent). Two of the Alberta Report articles

were published in Period 1, the first on April 15, 1985. One was published in Period 2, and one in Period 3. The Toronto Globe and Mail article was published during Period 1 on April 20, 1985. It took about three weeks before the issue received magazine coverage and almost four weeks before it received national coverage.

Summary

COATS was covered more by large city dailies than by small city dailies, probably mainly because the papers have more resources and more space for news to permit greater coverage of this kind of issue. In addition, over half of the students in the province live in the Calgary and Edmonton regions. Calgary which is three hundred kilometers from the capital of Edmonton had more coverage than Edmonton so that closeness to government did not seem to influence the amount of coverage.

In comparing the coverage of large city dailies to that of small city dailies, large city dailies had a greater percentage of coverage in Periods 1 and 2 when the debate was liveliest and most controversial while small city dailies had a greater percentage of coverage in Period 3 when the announcements were made.

It took about four weeks for the issue to get national coverage while it took about three weeks to receive magazine and weekly coverage. Yet, press releases were sent to all daily, weekly, national and magazine publications at the same time. Coverage in small city dailies was as fast as in large city dailies.

Proposition 6. Large daily newspapers give greater coverage to policy issues than do smaller papers.

Proposition 7. Geographic proximity to the provincial capital is not a factor in influencing the amount of coverage of government business.

Proposition 8. Large city dailies carry more controversial news items than small city dailies which reserve their resources for announcements.

Proposition 9. The longer the debate the greater the likelihood that it will receive national, magazine or weekly news coverage.

Sources

Each item was analyzed for source or attribution; then it was grouped into one of four categories. According to Herbert Gans (1980, p. 80), sources are the "actors whom journalists observe or interview ." As such, "they provide information as members or representatives of organized and unorganized interest groups."

The first category of sources included the Minister, ministerial aides, or government news releases. The Minister was quoted many times when speaking during Question Period in the Legislative assembly. The second category included the ATA president, ATA executive or headquarters staff, local ATA officers and representatives, and ATA news releases. The third category included other sources such as ASTA officials and trustees, school superintendents, and legislators. Legislator comments were also often taken from Question Period. Also included in this category was former MLA Ron Ghitter, who headed the Committee on Tolerance and Understanding and eventually became a candidate for the premiership. The final category was background information, generally taken from previous stories.

Of the 171 items, 63 (36.8 percent) had only one source of attribution. The ATA was the only source in an item more frequently than the Minister or other sources combined. As shown in Figure 5.2, the ATA was the only source in 32 items (18.7 percent). This compares to the Minister which was the only source in 19 items (11.1 percent) and other sources which were used alone as attribution in 12 items (7.0 percent). Another 44 items (25.7 percent) drew only from background information, rather than from original sources. As will be shown, most often background information was used in writing editorials and columns.

Combined with the Minister, other sources or background information, the ATA was used as attribution in 51 items (29.8 percent), bringing its total use as attribution in items to 83 (48.5 percent). The Minister was combined with the other categories in 49 items, bringing its total as a source to 68 (38.8 percent). Combined with other categories, other sources were used as attribution 31 times (18.1 percent), bringing the total in this category to 43 (25.1 percent). Only 13 items (7.6 percent) drew from background information as well as original sources. The Minister and the ATA combined accounted for 24 cases. The Minister, the ATA, and other sources combined for 10 items.

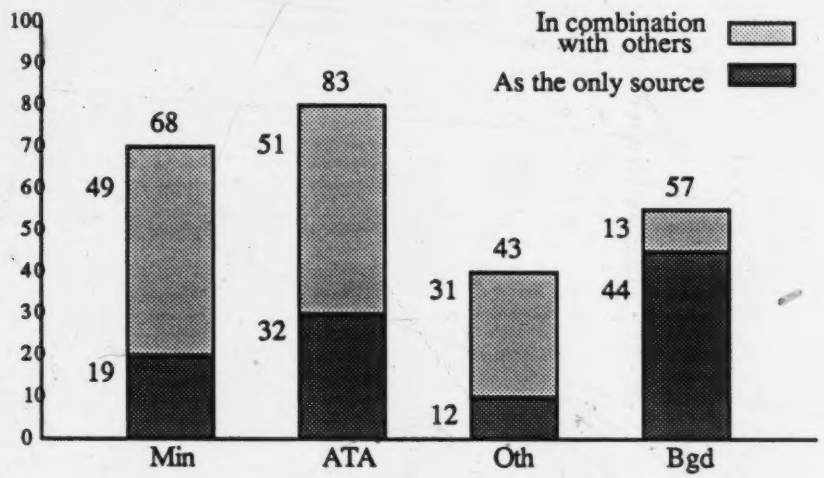

Figure 5.2. Sources alone or in combination with others.

Activity of Sources in Time Periods

One hundred six items (62 percent) were published in Period 1, 42 items (24.6 percent) in Period 2, and 23 items (13.5 percent) in Period 3. Table 5.2 shows the activity of the various sources in the three time periods. The ATA was quoted most as a source in Periods 1 and 2 when the most controversial items about the Council were published. The

Minister was most active as a source during Period 3, when the compromise between the Minister and the ATA and when the Council members were announced.

Table 5.2

Activity of Sources in Time Periods

		Minister		ATA		Others		Backgrd	
	Items	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Period 1	106	41	38.7	53	50.0	25	23.6	40	37.8
Period 2	42	11	26.2	17	40.5	12	28.6	10	23.8
Period 3	23	16	69.6	13	56.5	6	26.1	7	30.4

The Minister, who accounted for 38.8 percent of all items, was source 41 times (or 38.7 percent) in Period 1 and 11 times (or 26.2 percent) in Period 2. During Period 3, it was source 16 times, which was 69.6% of all items.

The ATA, which was a source in 48.5 percent of the items, was more active than the Minister in Period 1 when it was source in 53 items (50 percent) and in Period 2 when it was source 17 times (40.5 percent). It was a little less active as a source in Period 3 with 13 items (56.5 percent).

Other sources, which were 25.1 percent of all items, were used fairly consistently throughout. They were cited as attribution in 25 items (23.6 percent) in Period 1, 12 (28.6 percent) in Period 2, and 6 (26.1) percent in Period 3.

Background information, which was used 57 times (33.3 percent) in all periods, was quoted more frequently in Period 1 (40 times or 37.8 percent) and less frequently in Period 2 (10 times or 23.8 percent) and in Period 3 (seven times or 30.4 percent).

The Use of Sources in Publications

As shown in Table 5.3, both the Minister and the ATA were sources an equal number of times in large city dailies. However, in small city dailies the ATA far exceeded the Minister as a source. In both weekly publications and in the Alberta Report and the Toronto Globe and Mail, background information served as the principal source.

Of the 105 items published in large city dailies, the Minister was a source in 47 items (44.8 percent), with 15 where it was the only source. Similarly, the ATA was a source in 47 items, but with 17 where it was the only source. Other sources were quoted 30 times (28.6 percent), with nine where it was the only source. Background information was the source 27 times (25.7 percent), with 24 times where it was the only source.

Of the 40 items published in small city dailies, the Minister was source in 16 items (40 percent), with only three where it was the sole source. The ATA was a source more frequently in 27 items (67.5 percent), with 11 where it was the only source. Other sources were quoted eight times (20 percent), with no times as a single source. Background information was the source 14 times (35 percent). Eight of these times it was the sole source.

Weekly newspapers accounted for 21 of the items. The Minister was quoted only twice (9.5 percent), the ATA only six times (28.6 percent), and other sources only four times (19 percent). Background information was cited 12 times (57.1 percent).

In the other publications category, which included the Alberta Report and the Toronto Globe and Mail, there were five items. The Minister and the ATA were each quoted three times while other sources were used only once. Background information was used four times.

Table 5.3

Comparison of Sources in Large City and Small City Dailies, in Weeklies and in Other Publications

		Minister		ATA		Others		Backgrd	
	Items	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Large City Dailies	105	47	44.8	47	44.8	30	28.6	27	25.7
Small City Dailies	40	16	40.0	27	67.5	8	20.0	14	35.0
Weekly Newspapers	21	2	9.5	6	28.6	4	19.0	12	57.1
Other Publications	5	3	60.0	3	60.0	1	20.0	4	80.0

Table 5.4 compares sources in large city dailies. In the Calgary Herald which published 40 items, the ATA (17 times or 42.5 percent) was source more frequently than the Minister (14 times or 35 percent). Other sources accounted for 10 items (25 percent), while background information was used in 12 items (30 percent). The Calgary Sun with 17 items was close to the Calgary Herald in percentages for each source. The Minister was a source seven times (41.2 percent), the ATA eight times (47.1 percent), others four times (23.5 percent), and background information five times (29.4 percent). In the Edmonton Journal which published 30 items, the Minister and the ATA were both sources 15 times (50 percent). Others were sources 12 times (40 percent) and background information four times (13.3 percent). In the Edmonton Sun (with 18 items published), the Minister was source more frequently than in the other publications (11 times or 61.1 percent). (Of these the minister was the sole source only three times.) The ATA was quoted as a source in seven items (38.9 percent), others in three items (16.7 percent), and background information in six items (33.3 percent).

Table 5.4

Comparison of Sources in Large City Dailies

		Minister		ATA		Others		Backgrd	
	Items	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Calgary Herald	40	14	35.0	17	42.5	10	25.0	12	30.0
Calgary Sun	17	7	41.2	8	47.1	4	23.5	5	29.4
Edmonton Journal	30	15	50.0	15	50.0	12	40.0	4	13.3
Edmonton Sun	18	11	61.1	7	38.9	3	16.7	6	33.3

Table 5.5 compares sources in small city daily newspapers. Four of five papers cited ATA sources more frequently than the Minister. This may be due to at least three factors: firstly, the ATA executive may have made itself more available to small dailies; secondly, regional meetings were held in the small school districts throughout the province; and finally, each small city has local ATA representatives to serve as sources.

In seven items, the Ft. McMurray Today cited the Minister only once while it quoted the ATA five times. Other sources and background information were used only once. The Grande Prairie Herald-Tribune in 10 items quoted the Minister three times, the ATA six times, other sources twice, and background information five times. In seven items, the Lethbridge Herald quoted the Minister three times and the ATA four times. Other sources and background information were both quoted twice. The Medicine Hat News published 12 items, the most number of stories about the Council of any small city daily. It quoted the Minister six times, the ATA nine times, other sources once, and background information five times. The Red Deer Advocate, which with four items published the least number of any small city daily, quoted the Minister and the ATA in three items each and other sources and background information in one item each.

Table 5.5

Comparison of Sources in Small City Dailies

		Minister		ATA		Others		Backgrd	
	Items	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Ft. McMurray Today	7	1	14.3	5	71.4	1	14.3	1	14.3
Gr. P. Herald-Tribune	10	3	30.0	6	60.0	2	20.0	5	50.0
Lethbridge Herald	7	3	42.9	4	57.1	2	28.6	2	28.6
Medicine Hat News	12	6	50.0	9	75.0	1	8.3	5	41.7
Red Deer Advocate	4	3	75.0	3	75.0	1	25.0	1	25.0

Summary

The ATA, alone or in combination with others, was the source for stories on the formation of COATS more frequently than the Minister or others. Question Period was the source of many quotes from the Minister and opposition MLAs. (This is consistent with the literature which supports the importance of Question Period as a source for media coverage.) The ATA was more often the source during Periods 1 and 2 when coverage emphasized the controversy while the Minister was more often the source in Period 3 when reporting relied on official announcements. The ATA exceeded the Minister as a source in small city dailies. In publications such as the weekly papers, the magazine or national newspaper where there was less emphasis on deadlines, background information served more as a source.

Proposition 10. Interest group members are more available as sources than government officials and will be quoted as sources more frequently.

Proposition 11. Question Period in the Legislature provides a mutually beneficial opportunity for politicians to get press exposure and for reporters to get stories.

Proposition 12. Government officials have the advantage of announcing policy to get news coverage whereas interest groups have to rely on press need for reaction.

Proposition 13. The news media in smaller communities rely upon the reaction from interest group members to localize stories.

Kinds of Items

Items were classified into two broad categories, either as news or opinion. News items were further divided into news stories, news features, or verbatim statements. Opinion items were categorized as editorials, columns, letters-to-the-editor, or cartoons.

Of the 171 items, 114 or two-thirds fell into the broad news category. All but four of these were news stories. There were only three news features and one verbatim statement. The remaining third (57 items) were opinion, 26 (15.2 percent) editorials, 14 (8.2 percent) columns, 12 (7 percent) letters, and five (2.9 percent) cartoons.

Kinds of Items by Periods

Table 5.6 breaks the seven kinds of items into the three time periods. Over 60 percent of all items, except letters, were printed in Period 1. Most letters were written in Period 2, more than a month after the initial announcement of the Council. Only two kinds of items, news stories and editorials, were published in Period 3.

During Period 1, although all kinds of items were represented, the majority (67 items or 63.2 percent) were news stories. In addition, sixteen (or 15.1 percent) were editorials while 11 (10.4 percent) were columns. This period was very active with over 60 percent of all kinds of items, except letters, published. Only a third of the letters were printed in Period 1. The first news story was published the afternoon of the announcement, March 29, 1985, in the Edmonton Journal. The first column was published two days later in the Edmonton Sun. The first editorial was published less than a week later on April 3 in the Calgary Herald. All three news features and the only verbatim statement were printed in this period.

During Period 2, the remaining two thirds of the letters were printed. Other kinds of items that were represented accounted for only about one fifth of their items. News stories represented 57.1 percent (24) of the items during the period while letters represented 19 percent (8) and editorials 14.3 percent (6).

During Period 3, when only news stories and editorials were published, each represented about 15 percent of their categories. Nineteen news stories (82.6 percent) and four editorials (17.4 percent) were published.

Table 5.6

Kinds of Items by Periods

	Period 1		Period 2		Period 3		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
News Items								
News stories	67	60.9	24	21.8	19	17.3	110	64.3
News features	3	100.0	-		-		3	1.8
Verbatim statements	1	100.0	-		-		1	.6
Opinion Items								
Editorials	16	61.5	6	23.1	4	15.4	26	15.2
Columns	11	78.6	3	21.4	-		14	8.2
Letters	4	33.3	8	66.7	-		12	7.0
Cartoons	4	80.0	1	20.0	-		5	2.9
Total	106	62.0	42	24.6	23	13.5	171	100.0

Kinds of Items by Publications

As shown in Table 5.7, most publications carried all kinds of items, although there are some exceptions. Notably, the news features were unique to the Alberta Report magazine and to the national Toronto Globe and Mail.

Feature writing is the accepted style in magazines and in in-depth reporting. The Globe and Mail would have anticipated only a onetime story about the issue so covered all aspects of the story up to that time.

Another exception, the verbatim statement, ran on the editorial pages in a large city daily, the Edmonton Journal, on April 9, 1987. It was an excerpt from the Minister's comments in the legislature, which the editorial staff obviously considered best run as a verbatim statement. This kind of item only occurred once.

Table 5.7

Kinds of Items by Publications

	Large Dailies		Small Dailies		Weeklies		Other		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
News items										
News stories	70	63.6	32	29.1	7	6.4	1	0.9	110	64.3
News features	-		-		-		3	100.0	3	1.8
Verbatim statemts	1	100.0	-		-		-		1	.6
Opinion items										
Editorials	10	38.5	6	23.1	10	38.5	-		26	15.2
Columns	11	78.5	2	14.3	-		1	7.1	14	8.2
Letters	9	75.0	-		3	25.0	-		12	7.0
Cartoons	4	80.0	-		1	20.0	-		5	2.9
Total	105	61.4	40	23.4	21	12.3	5	2.9	171	100.0

Letters and cartoons appeared only in the large city dailies and in the weeklies. Columns ran in all kinds of publications except the weeklies. Editorials ran in the large and small dailies and the weeklies, but not in the other publications. These exceptions can not

be attributed to the kinds of publications nor to the way they cover issues, but may just as well be a result of editorial decisions on this issue.

Large city dailies ran the majority of news stories (70 or 63.6 percent), columns (11 or 78.5 percent), letters (nine or 75 percent), and cartoons (four or 80 percent). Large city dailies and weeklies equally shared the number of editorials (10 or 38.5 percent each).

Among the large city dailies, the Calgary Herald, which carried the largest coverage of the issue (40 items or 23.4 percent), ran more editorials (5), more columns (4), more letters (5), and more cartoons (3) than any other publication. It carried an equal number of news stories (23) as the Edmonton Journal. The Journal, however, ran fewer editorials (2), columns (1), and letters (3). It had no cartoons. The Sun newspapers each carried 12 news stories and three columns. The Edmonton Sun carried two editorials and one letter while the Calgary Sun ran one editorial and one cartoon.

Among the small city dailies, the Medicine Hat News had the greatest coverage, running nine news stories, two editorials and one column. The Grande Prairie Herald-Tribune ran seven news stories, two editorials and one column. The Ft. McMurray Today ran only news stories (7) while the Lethbridge Herald printed six news stories and one editorial. The Red Deer Advocate gave the least coverage with three news stories and one editorial.

It is interesting that from the 11 weeklies which were clipped more editorials (10) were published than news stories (7). The number of editorials was equal to the number in large city dailies and surpassed the number in small city dailies. In addition, three letters and one cartoon were printed in the weekly publications.

Kinds of Items by Sources

News items drew primarily from the Minister, the ATA, or other sources. Opinion items were written mainly from background information.

The Minister was the source in 65 (59.1 percent) of the news stories; the ATA was the source in 73 (66.3 percent), others were sources in 35 (31.8 percent), and background information was used in 10 (9.1 percent). One of the three news features drew from all sources, another from the Minister, the ATA and background information, and the other from background information only.

Of the 44 times that background information was used alone, 24 were editorials, 13 were columns and five were cartoons. Seven of the letters were written by other sources, possibly teachers, while five were written by ATA executive or staff.

Summary

Two thirds of letters ran in Period 2 while most other kinds of items ran in Period 1. Only news stories and editorials were published in Period 3 in response to the official announcements.

Most publications carried both news and opinion items. News features were unique to the magazine and national publication. More editorials than news stories ran in the weeklies. The number of editorials was equal to the number in large city dailies, but surpassed the number in small city dailies.

News items drew primarily from the Minister, the ATA and other sources while opinion drew mainly from background information. Letters were written mainly by teachers or by ATA executive and staff.

Proposition 14. Coverage of an issue must continue for some time before the public responds through letters-to-the-editor.

Proposition 15. Weeklies use editorials more often than news stories to cover stories where the sources are outside the communities.

Proposition 16. Journalists will keep news stories updated using current comments and happenings while they will draw from background information to write opinion items.

Proposition 17. One measure of public opinion about an issue is the number of letters-to-the-editor.

Location

Items were analyzed in terms of their location within the publications. Items were classified as front page, front section, middle section, and back section. A page one designation was given to the first three pages in tabloids where the front page is a photo and headlines. The front section generally included the editorial pages.

Generally, editors put the most important news items closer to the front of the paper. However, this is not always true because frequently, as in the papers studied in this case, middle and back sections are used for special sections like city news, sports, and entertainment while provincial news is relegated to the front sections with international and national news.

News about the council appeared on the front page of newspapers 23 times (15.4 percent of the valid cases). It appeared in the front section 88 times (59.1 percent), in the middle section 30 times (20.1 percent), and in the back section eight times (5.4 percent). Because not all clippings showed page numbers, 22 cases were not classified, 17 from Period 1, four from Period 2, and one from Period 3.

Location and Periods

News about the Council was a front page item 16.9 percent (15 items) of the time during Period 1, dropping to 10.5 percent (4 items) in Period 2, and peaking at 18.2 percent (4 items) in Period 3.

The Council was consistently a front section news item about 60 percent of the time in all periods. In Period 1 it was front section news 59.6 percent of the time (53 items), 57.9 percent (22 items) in Period 2, and 59.1 percent (13 items) in Period 3.

News about the Council appeared in the middle sections 20.2 percent (18 items) in Period 1, 23.7 percent (9 items) in Period 2, and 13.6 percent (3 items) in Period 3. It

appeared in the back sections 3.4 percent (3 times) in Period 1, 7.9 percent (3 items) in Period 2, and 9.1 percent (2 items) in Period 3.

Location and Publications

A comparison of location between the publications may suggest the importance given to coverage of the Council by different editors. However, this comparison would only be true where publications follow a similar format, which most in this study did. Exceptions are Alberta Report, which followed a magazine format, and publications which were too small to make a distinction between sections. Table 5.8 shows how the various publications covered this policy issue.

Although not all the page locations were available, small city dailies seem to have given the debate about the Council better position than did large city dailies, although this was probably a function of the size of the publications or amount of news in the community. Small city dailies carried 18.4 percent (7 items) on front page compared to 16 percent (15 items) in large city dailies. Practically the remainder of the items in small city dailies (78.9 percent or 30 items) appeared in the first section while only 46.8 percent (44 items) appeared in the first section of the large city dailies.

Of the weekly publications reported, only 6.3 percent (one item) appeared on front page while 87.5 percent (14 items) appeared in the first section.

Among the large city dailies, although the Edmonton Journal gave the Council a greater percentage of front page coverage (23. 1 percent or six items) while the Calgary Sun gave it the least (6.7 percent or one item), the Calgary Herald gave the Council the best coverage when combining front page and first section items (15.8 percent or 6 items on front and 57.9 percent 22 items in the first section).

Of the small city dailies, the Council made front page coverage in all papers except the Medicine Hat News. Of the four items published in the Red Deer Advocate, two

appeared on page one. Items in the News (which gave the most coverage to the issue of any small city daily) all appeared in the first section although none appeared on page one.

Table 5.8

Comparison of Location Between Publications

	Front Page		First Section		Middle Section		Back Section		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Large City Dailies	15	16.0	44	46.8	27	28.7	8	8.5	94	63.1
Calgary Herald	6	15.8	22	57.9	7	18.4	3	7.9	38	25.5
Calgary Sun	1	6.7	6	40.0	8	53.3			15	10.1
Edmonton Journal	6	23.1	9	34.6	7	26.9	4	15.4	26	17.4
Edmonton Sun	2	13.3	7	46.7	5	33.3	1	6.7	15	10.1
Small City Dailies	7	18.4	30	78.9	1	2.6			38	25.5
Ft. McM Today	2	28.6	5	71.4					7	4.7
Gr. P. Herald-Trib	2	25.0	6	75.0					8	5.4
Lethbridge Herald	1	14.3	5	71.4	1	14.3			7	4.7
Medicine Hat News			12	100.0					12	8.1
Red Deer Advocate	2	50.0	2	50.0					4	2.7
Weekly Newspapers	1	6.3	14	87.5	1	6.3			16	10.7
Others (Globe & Mail)					1	100.0			1	.7
Total	23	15.4	88	59.1	30	20.1	8	5.4	149	100.0

Location and Sources

The ATA appear to have received better positioning than the Minister. This is true in spite of the better coverage given to stories in Period 3 where the Minister was cited more frequently because of his role in making announcements. Over 75 percent of the items with the ATA as a source made the first page and first section of newspapers while 60 percent of

the items with the Minister as a source received similar positioning. With the minister as the only source only 35 percent of the items made page one and the first section while with the ATA as the only source 72 percent of the items received the same coverage.

Table 5.9, which shows the exact figures, also shows that 70 percent of items with other sources were printed on page one and in the first section. First page coverage of all three of these sources was about 25 percent, while first page coverage of background information as a source was only 3.9 percent. However, because background information was the prime source for opinion items, of the items with background information, 86.3 percent were in the first section.

Table 5.9

Positioning of Items by Sources

	Front Page		First Section		Middle Section		Back Section		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Minister	14	24.1	21	36.2	17	29.3	6	10.3	58	38.9
Minister alone	1	5.9	5	29.4	8	47.1	3	17.6	17	11.4
ATA	18	26.5	35	51.5	12	17.6	3	4.4	68	45.6
ATA alone	4	16.0	14	56.0	5	20.0	2	8.0	25	16.8
Other Sources	10	25.6	18	46.2	9	23.1	2	5.1	39	26.2
Background Information	2	3.9	44	86.3	5	9.8	0	0.0	51	34.2
Total	23	15.4	88	59.1	30	20.1	8	5.4	149	100.0*

*22 Missing Cases

Location of Kinds of Items

The majority of the 55 opinion items analyzed for location (90.0 percent) appeared on the editorial pages in the first section of the papers. News stories (92 items) were

dispersed throughout the newspapers although 64.1 percent appeared either on the front page (23.9 percent) or in the first section (40.2 percent) of the papers.

Summary

Almost 75 percent of the items about the Council were on either the front page or in the first section. Journalistic practice would suggest the press considered the issue important. However, no comparison of the coverage of other issues is available to validate this generalization.

Although coverage of the Council was consistently in the front section (about 60 percent) during all periods, it was not a front page item as consistently in all periods. During Period 2 it dropped to 10.5 percent from 16.9 percent in Period 1. In Period 3, it again rose to 18.2 percent.

Small city dailies seem to have given the debate about the Council better positioning than did large city dailies, although this might be a function of the size of paper or the greater amount of news in a larger community. The larger city papers have more sections and more space available, but only the same amount of limited space on the front page and in the first section. Moreover, larger city papers would have a greater competition of stories for the same limited space on the front page and in the first section.

The ATA appeared to have received better positioning than the Minister. Over 75 percent of items with the ATA as one of the sources received coverage on the first page or in the first section as compared to 60 percent for the Minister. With the Minister as the only source 35 percent of the items made front page or the first section while with the ATA as the only source 72 percent of items received the same coverage. This might be explained by the controversial nature of ATA comments reported by the press. The qualitative content analysis (described in greater detail in Chapter 6) as well as the analysis of viewpoint (later in this chapter) show that ATA comments were more controversial than those of the Minister.

The majority of opinion items appeared in the first sections -- on the editorial pages -- while news items were dispersed throughout the papers.

Proposition 18. Placement in the newspaper is an indication of the importance given to a story by the press.

Proposition 19. Small city dailies place policy stories closer to the front than do large city dailies.

Proposition 20. Comments that are more controversial or sensational receive better placement than comments that are less biased.

Length

Items were measured in column inches and averages calculated and compared according to period, publication, source, kind, viewpoint, and location.

The average length of items was 17 column inches; the mode was 15, the median was 16. The length of items ranged from 2 to 44 column inches. The total amount of copy published was 2,908 column inches.

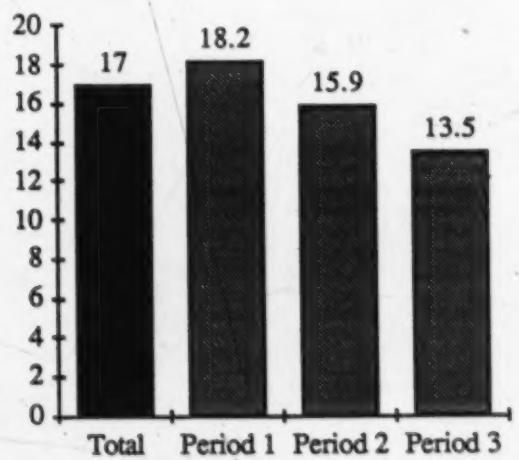

Figure 5.3. Average length of item in column inches by period

The longest articles as shown in Figure 5.3 were during the height of the controversy in Period 1 while the shortest items dealt with the reconciliation and announcement of Council members in Period 3. Items in the first period averaged 18.2 column inches, in the second period 15.9 inches, and in the third period 13.5 inches.

Length by Publication

Figure 5.4 shows that large city dailies ran the shortest items at 15.7 column inches, small city dailies the next longest at 17.2 column inches, weeklies the next at 20.9 column inches, and other publications the longest at 27.4 column inches. This might be explained in part by the kinds of items in each category of publication. As will be shown, features were longer than opinion, opinion were longer than news. Most items in the dailies were news stories. Most items in weeklies were opinion in the form of editorials or letters. Most in the other publications were news features.

Of the large city dailies, as might be predicted because of the traditional brevity of tabloid articles, the Sun tabloids ran short items, the Calgary Sun averaging 13.6 column inches and the Edmonton Sun 14.7 inches. Surprisingly, the Edmonton Journal articles were about the same length, averaging 14.2 column inches. The Calgary Herald had the longest items at an average of 18.1 inches which might be partly because the Herald ran more opinion pieces than did the Journal.

Of the small city dailies, the longest items were in the Grande Prairie Herald-Tribune (averaging 19.7 column inches) and the Medicine Hat News (averaging 18.8). These publications also provided the most extensive coverage of the small city dailies. Thomson's Lethbridge Herald, although it ran seven items, had the shortest articles, averaging 13.3 column inches. The Red Deer Advocate and the Ft. McMurray Today average 17 and 15 column inches, respectively.

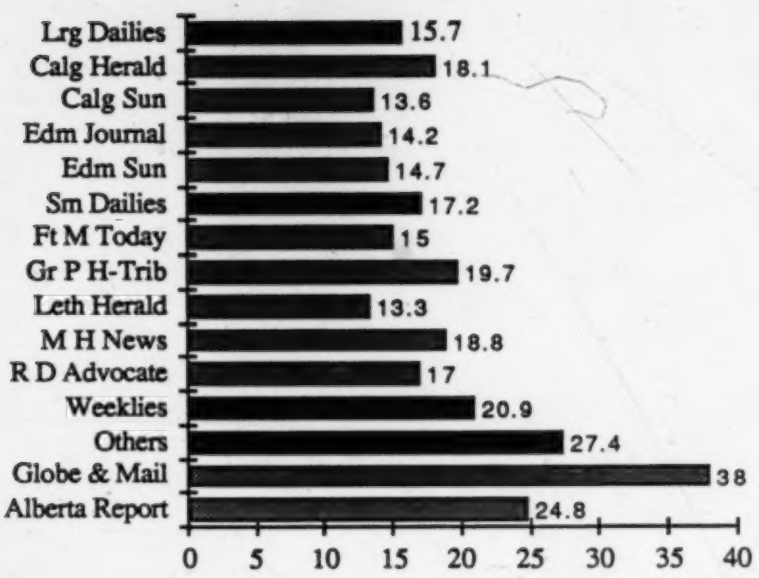

Figure 5.4. Average length of items in column inches by publication

Length by Source

Lengths when distributed by sources ranged from 8 column inches to 30 column inches. The one item of 8 column inches used other sources and background information. The one item of 30 column inches combined all four sources. The Minister alone averaged 10.1 column inches while the ATA alone averaged 16.1. Other sources alone also averaged 16.1 column inches while background information alone averaged 20.8 column inches.

Length by Kind of Item

Opinion items (which averaged 19.2 column inches) were longer in length than news items (which averaged 15.9 column inches) although editorials and news stories, which were the major items of each category, were about the same length. As shown in Figure 5.5, news features and cartoons were the longest items, averaging 32.7 and 32.6 column inches, respectively. Columns were the next longest at 23.1 inches, editorials the

next at 16.6, then news stories at 15.5, and letters at 14.6. The one verbatim statement was 8 column inches.

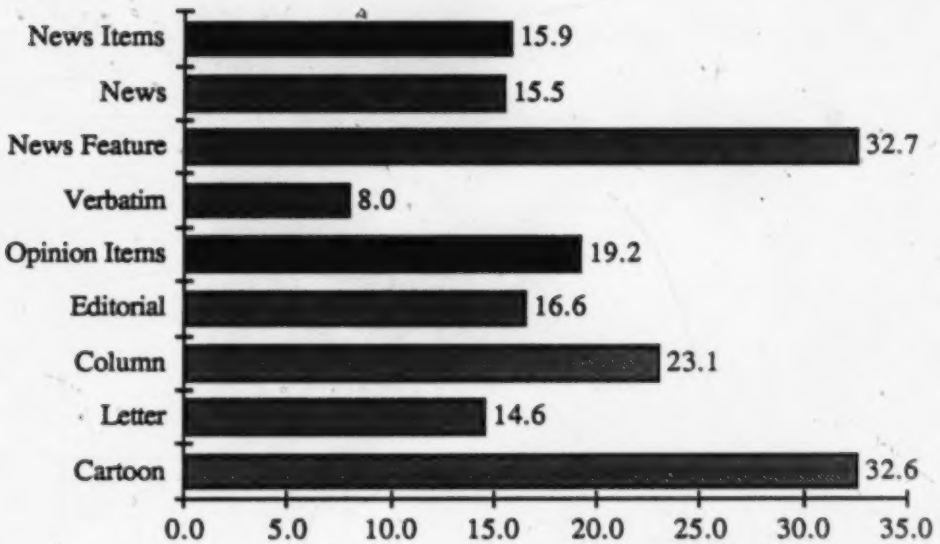

Figure 5.5. Average length of items in column inches by kind

Length by Location

As might be expected, items progressively got smaller as they were relegated toward the back of the newspapers. As shown in Figure 5.6, front page items averaged 18.2 column inches in length, first section items 17.2 inches, middle section 14.4, and back section 11.

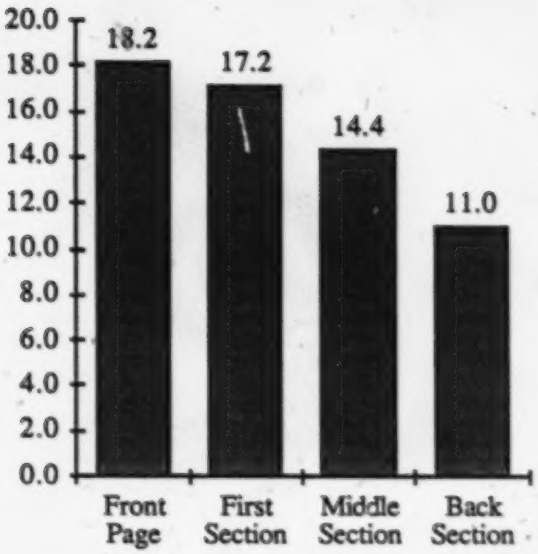

Figure 5.6. Average length of items in column inches by location

Summary

The longest articles were during the height of the controversy in Period 1 while the shortest items dealt with the reconciliation and announcement of Council members in Period 3.

Large city dailies ran the shortest items, small city dailies the next longest, weeklies the next, and other publications the longest. This might be explained in part by the kinds of items in each category of publication. Features were longer than opinion, opinion were longer than news. Most items in the dailies were news stories. Most items in weeklies were opinion in the form of editorials or letters. Most in the other publications were news features. On the other hand, this phenomenon might be explained by the different reporting and editing styles of each category of publication. The two Sun tabloids, the Edmonton Journal, and Thomson's Lethbridge Herald averaged the shortest story lengths. The

Journal's sister paper in the Southam chain, the Calgary Herald, averaged some of the longer items among the dailies.

Items with the Minister alone as a source averaged 10.1 column inches while the ATA alone averaged 16.1. This again might be explained by the more controversial substance of ATA comments.

Although opinion items were longer in length than news items, editorials and news stories, which were the major items of each category, were about the same length. News features and cartoons were the longest items. Columns were the next longest, editorials the next, then news stories, and letters.

Items progressively got smaller as they were relegated toward the back of the newspapers.

Proposition 21. The print media publish longer items about controversy than about reconciliation and official announcements.

Proposition 22. The length of items is a function of the kinds of items and the editing and reporting styles of different publications.

Proposition 23. Editorials and news stories are on average about the same length, while features and columns are longer and letters-to-the-editor are shorter.

Proposition 24. Items in the back sections of newspapers are smaller than in the front sections.

Viewpoint

"Political balance is usually achieved," according to Herbert Gans (1980, pp. 175, 176), "by identifying the dominant, most widespread, or most vocal positions, then presenting 'both sides.'" Further, he indicates that, when two sides of a story are presented, the news is "more objective" and "often more dramatic as well."

The Minister and the ATA represented the two sides of this story. Items were analyzed to determine the degree of balance in each item. They were rated for viewpoint

using the following codes: +2, strongly favored the Minister of Education; +1, favored the Minister; 0, neutral or balanced viewpoint; -1, favored the ATA; and -2, strongly favored the ATA.

A number of criteria were considered in deciding whether an item strongly favor one party or the other: (a) the sources, whether from the Minister, the ATA, others or background information; (b) the proportion of space given to viewpoints, including quotations; (c) the slant of the lead; and (d) the slant of the headline. In editorials, the editorial viewpoint favored one position over another. In order to validate the selection, a newspaper editor was asked to rate ten items chosen randomly from the 171. Her rating agreed nine of ten times.

Of the 171 items, 22 strongly favored the Minister, 27 favored the minister, 48 were neutral, 55 favored the ATA, and 19 strongly favored the ATA. The mean was -.129, suggesting the overall coverage favored the ATA, although very slightly. Statistically this difference was not significant.

Viewpoint of Periods

During Period 1, coverage favored the ATA, while during Period 2 and Period 3, it was more closer to being balanced. During Period 3, a greater percentage of individual stories were neutral.

The mean in Period 1 was -.208, with 13 items rating strongly favoring the ATA (-2), 37 items favoring the ATA (-1), 13 items favoring the Minister (+1), and 14 items strongly favoring the Minister. Only 29 items (27.4 percent) were neutral (0).

During Period 2, the coverage was fairly balanced, although the mean of .024 slightly favored the Minister and the number of items favored the ATA, 21 to 19. Five items strongly favored the ATA (-2), 16 items favored the ATA (-1), two were neutral (0), 11 favored the Minister (+1), and eight strongly favored the Minister (+2).

In period 3, again the coverage was fairly balanced, although the mean of -.044 showed slight favoritism for the ATA. The number of items was balanced with three favoring the ATA and three favoring the Minister. What is significant during this period was that 17 items were neutral (0). One item strongly favored the ATA (+2), two favored the ATA (-1), and three favored the Minister (+1).

Viewpoint of Publications

As a group, coverage in small city dailies showed the strongest support for the ATA, followed next by the large city dailies and then by the weeklies. Other publications favored the Minister's viewpoint. None of these differences were significant. Figure 5.7 summarizes the viewpoint of the publications, while Table 5.10 shows a detailed breakdown.

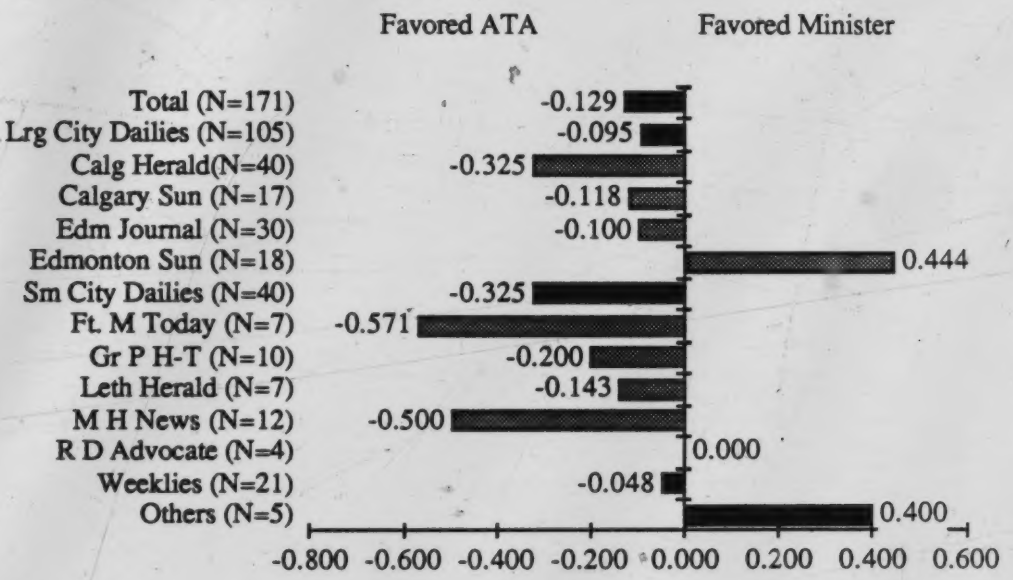

Figure 5.7. Viewpoint of Publications

Small city dailies (N=40) favored the ATA, showing a mean of -0.325. Means for individual papers ranged from neutral for the Red Deer Advocate to -0.571 for the Ft. McMurray Today. Isolated in the northeast corner of Alberta, the Ft. McMurray Today carried seven items about the Council, quoting the ATA as a source five times compared to once from the Minister. The Medicine Hat News, which carried the most extensive coverage of the Council among small dailies (N=12), favored the ATA only slightly less than the Ft. McMurray Today. With a mean of -0.500, it is isolated in the southeast corner of the province. It relied on the ATA as a source nine times and on the Minister six times.

Items in large city dailies (N=105) also favored the ATA viewpoint, but less than those in the small city dailies. Their mean was -0.095. This difference was partly due to the coverage by the Edmonton Sun which favored the Minister (N=18, mean=0.444). The Edmonton Sun relied on the Minister for information 11 times and the ATA seven times. On the other extreme, the Calgary Herald (N=40) had a mean of -0.325. In the Calgary Herald, the difference between the use of the Minister as a source and the ATA was not great (14 times for the Minister compared to the ATA's 17 times). However, the Calgary Herald gave more coverage to Ron Ghitter's opposition to the Council than any other publication. He was a source seven times. Coverage by the Edmonton Journal (N=30, mean=-0.100) and by the Calgary Sun (N=17, mean=-0.118) was very close to balanced. The Journal quoted the Minister and the ATA 15 times each while the Calgary Sun quoted the Minister seven times and the ATA eight.

Weeklies only slightly favored the ATA with a mean of -0.048. Only one item was neutral, while 12 items, mostly news stories, favored the ATA and eight items, mostly editorials favored the Minister. Of the 12 items favoring the ATA, 11 were rated -1 and one was rated -2. The eight items favoring the Minister were equally divided, four rated at +1 and four at +2.

Although the four news features in the other publications were balanced, a column in Alberta Report came out strongly in support of the Minister, making the mean for other publications +0.400. This mean is distorted by the small number of items.

Table 5.10

Viewpoint of Publications

	N	(-2)	(-1)	(0)	(+1)	(+2)	Mean*
Large City Dailies	105	11	31	33	17	13	-0.095
Calgary Herald	40	3	17	12	6	2	-0.325
Calgary Sun	17	2	5	6	1	3	-0.118
Edmonton Journal	30	5	6	8	9	2	-0.100
Edmonton Sun	18	1	3	7	1	6	+0.444
Small City Dailies	40	7	13	10	6	4	-0.325
Ft. McMurray Today	7	1	4	1	0	1	-0.571
Gr. Prairie Herald-Trib	10	2	3	2	1	2	-0.200
Lethbridge Herald	7	0	3	2	2	0	-0.143
Medicine Hat News	12	3	3	4	1	1	-0.500
Red Deer Advocate	4	1	0	1	2	0	0.000
Weeklies	21	1	11	1	4	4	-0.048
Other Publications	5	0	0	4	0	1	+0.400
Total	171	19	55	48	27	22	-0.129

*There was no significant difference between papers or groups of papers.

Viewpoint of Sources

As would be expected, when the Minister was the only source, coverage favored the Minister and, when the ATA was the only source, it favored the ATA. The mean for

items with the Minister as the only source (N=19) was +1.105; for the ATA as the only source (N=32) was -1.156.

Perhaps most interesting are figures where the Minister was combined as a source with the ATA, other sources, and background information in the same items. When the Minister and the ATA were combined as sources (N=24), the mean was -0.208, favoring the ATA. The Minister combined with the ATA and other sources (N=10) had a mean of -0.600. On the other hand the Minister combined with other sources (N=9, mean=0.222) and the Minister combined with background information (N=3, mean=0.667) both favored the Minister.

The ATA in combination with other sources generally favored the ATA (N=8,-0.500), except in combination with the Minister, other sources and background information when the items were neutral.

Other sources only (in most cases Ron Ghitter) (N=12, mean=-0.250) and other sources combined with background information (only one case) favored the ATA.

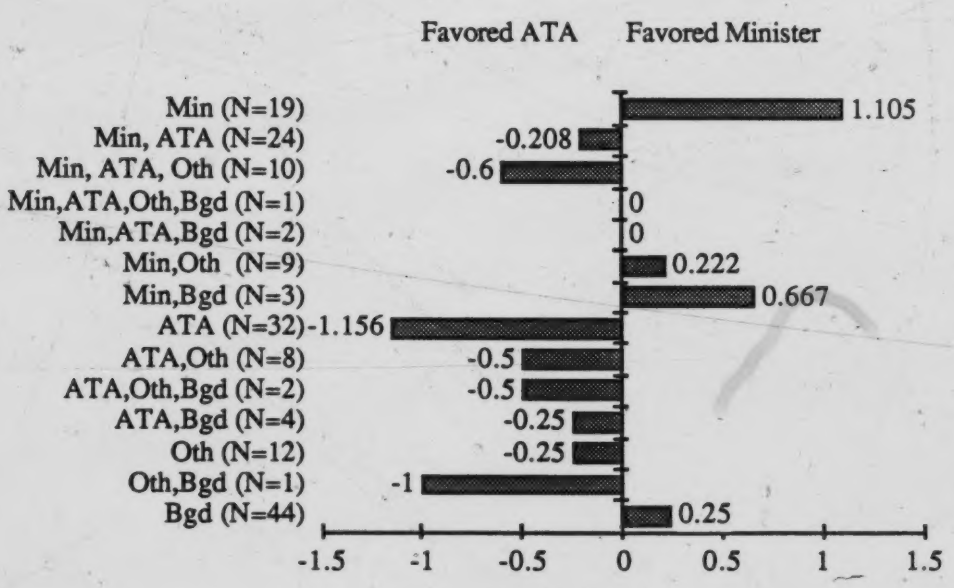

Figure 5.8. Viewpoint of Sources

Background information used alone as a source was most often used in opinion items and favored the Minister (N=44, mean=0.250).

Figure 5.8 shows the means of the viewpoint for the various groupings of sources. The number of most groupings was too small for statistical analysis, but in those groupings of 10 or larger, using an F-test, there was statistical significance between the Minister alone and the ATA alone and background information alone and the ATA at the 0.100 level.

Viewpoint and Kinds of Items

When items were analyzed according to viewpoint and kind, news items (N=114) favored the ATA with a mean of -0.246. Opinion items (N=57) favored the Minister with a mean of +0.105.

News stories (N=110) favored the ATA with a mean of -0.273. Sixteen news stories strongly favored the ATA (-2), 34 favored the ATA (-1), 32 were balanced (0), 20 favored the Minister (+1), and eight strongly favored the Minister (+2).

On the other hand, although there were only three, all news features were neutral. Each drew from opposing viewpoints, providing approximately equal space for each, to give balance in coverage. The one verbatim statement, which were comments by the Minister made in the legislature, strongly favored the Minister.

Editorials (N=26) favored the Minister with a mean of +0.423. Seven editorials favored the ATA (-1), eight were balanced (0), four favored the Minister (+1), and seven strongly favored the Minister (+2).

Columns (N=14) also favored the Minister, although slightly less than editorials. The mean was +0.357. Two columns strongly favored the ATA (-2), two favored the ATA (-1), four were neutral (0), one favored the Minister (+1), and five strongly favored the Minister (+2).

The majority of letters supported the ATA viewpoint, at least five of them written by ATA staff and many more by teachers. Letters (N=12) favored the ATA with a mean of

-0.667. One strongly favored the ATA (-2), nine favored the ATA (-1), none were neutral (0), and one each favored (+1) or strongly favored (+2) the Minister.

Cartoons (N=5) favored the ATA with a mean of -0.400. Three cartoons favored the ATA (-1), one was neutral (0), and one favored the Minister (+1).

Figure 5.9 shows the means of viewpoint of the kinds of items. no two groups were significantly different.

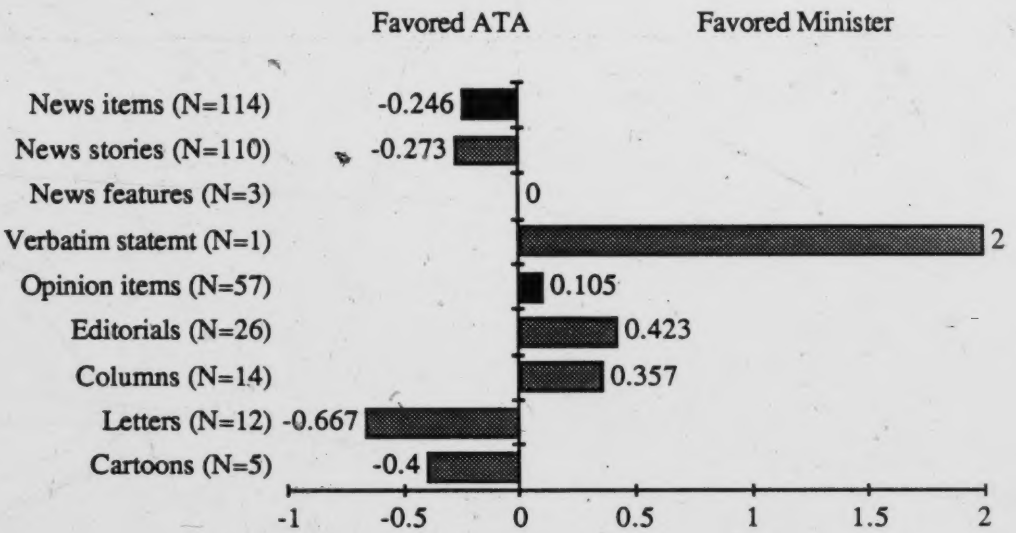

Figure 5.9. Viewpoint of Kinds of Items

Viewpoint of Items and Location

Of the 149 cases analyzed, the front pages (mean of -0.261) favored the ATA. Items appearing in the first sections (mean of -0.091) and in the middle section (mean of -0.033) were much closer to neutral while those appearing in the back section (mean of 0.375) favored the minister. Figure 5.10 shows the means of the viewpoint of items by location. There were no statistically significant differences in viewpoint between these sections.

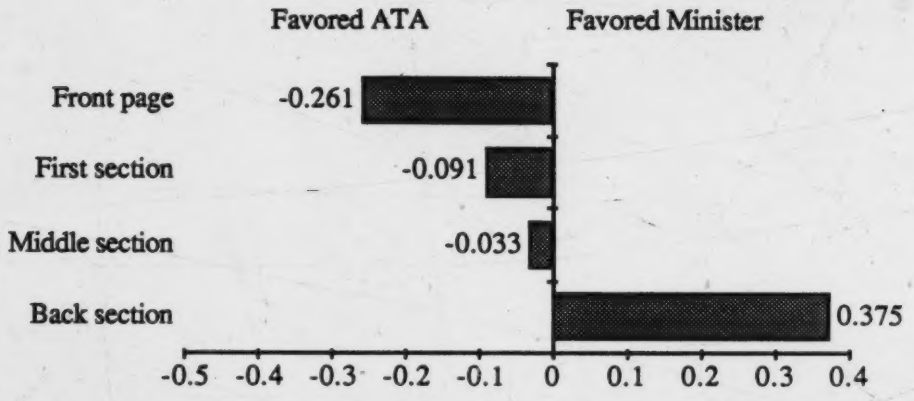

Figure 5.10. Viewpoint of Items by Location

Length by Viewpoint

There seemed to be little difference in length between viewpoints, although the two extremes, the one strongly favoring the ATA (mean of 18.9) and the other strongly favoring the Minister (mean of 18.4), had the greatest lengths. Items favoring the ATA averaged 16.4 column inches; items favoring the Minister averaged 14.4. Balanced items averaged 17.7 column inches. No two groups were significantly different.

Summary

Overall the items favored the ATA, although statistically this difference was not significant, suggesting an overall balance in coverage. Yet, only 48 (28 percent) of the items were neutral, suggesting that the majority of items (123 or 72 percent) lacked individual balance. Thirty five of 114 news items were neutral which is only slightly greater than the percentage of opinion items (13 of 57 or 23 percent).

During Period 1, coverage favored the ATA, while during Period 2 and Period 3, it was more closer to being balanced. During Period 3, a greater percentage of individual stories were neutral. As a group, coverage in small city dailies showed the strongest support for the ATA, followed next by the large city dailies and then by the weeklies. Other

publications generally were neutral except in one item which strongly favored the Minister's viewpoint. None of these differences were significant.

As would be expected, when the Minister was the only source, coverage favored the Minister and, when the ATA was the only source, it favored the ATA. Generally where the Minister, other sources or background information were combined as sources with the ATA, the items favored the ATA. Other sources only favored the ATA. Background information used alone as a source was most often used in opinion items and favored the Minister. There was statistical significance between the Minister alone and the ATA alone and background information alone and the ATA.

When items were analyzed according to viewpoint and kind, news items favored the ATA while opinion items favored the Minister. News stories favored the ATA. On the other hand, although there were only three, all news features were neutral. The one verbatim statement, which were comments by the Minister made in the legislature, strongly favored the Minister. Editorials favored the Minister. Columns also favored the Minister, although slightly less than editorials. The majority of letters supported the ATA viewpoint, at least five of them written by ATA staff and many more by teachers. Cartoons favored the ATA.

Of the 149 cases analyzed, the front pages favored the ATA. Items appearing in the first sections and in the middle section were much closer to neutral while those appearing in the back section favored the minister. As noted previously, the Minister was source more frequently during Periods 2 and 3, items increased in back sections during Periods 2 and 3, and the Minister was source a greater percentage for items in the back sections than other sources. However, none of these differences were significant.

There seemed to be little difference in length between viewpoints, although the two extremes, the one strongly favoring the ATA (mean of 18.9) and the other strongly favoring the Minister (mean of 18.4), had the greatest lengths.

Proposition 25. Balance in individual items is more difficult to achieve than balance in overall coverage.

Proposition 26. News and opinion items show about the same level of imbalance.

Proposition 27. Balance in coverage in the same publication varies over time.

Proposition 28. Balance in coverage varies across publications and categories of publications depending on the nature of the reporting and editing.

Proposition 29. The item favors the source if there is only one source.

Proposition 30. One source may so dominate that the use of any other sources in the item will not bring the item into balance.

Proposition 31. Government officials are less dominant as sources than interest groups.

Proposition 32. News items and opinion items may offset each other to provide overall balance.

Proposition 33. Letters from interest groups can dominate letters' columns.

Proposition 34. Viewpoint can vary from the front section to the back section of a paper depending on how important the story is at a certain time or depending on the importance of the source.

Proposition 35. The stronger the viewpoint on an issue the longer the article.

Summary

Coverage of the Council fell into three periods, the first characterized by confrontation, the second by a growing disinterest in the story by the media, and the third by reconciliation with the announcement of a compromise.

Large city dailies provided the majority of the print coverage, an indication that the issue received greater coverage in the large cities than in the small cities and rural areas. The first coverage of the issue occurred in the daily press the day of the announcement or the

day after, whereas the issue was over two weeks old before it received magazine coverage and more than three weeks old before it received coverage in the weekly and national press.

Sources were categorized into four groups. The ATA was a source in 83 items, the Minister in 68, background information in 57, and other sources in 43. The ATA was most active as a source in Periods 1 and 2. In Period 3 the Minister was the most active source. Both the Minister and the ATA were sources an equal number of times in large city dailies. However, in small city dailies the ATA far exceeded the Minister as a source. In weekly publications and in the magazine and national newspaper, background information served as the principal source.

Of the 171 items, two-thirds (114) fell into the broad news category. All but four of these were news stories. Three of the four were feature articles and one was a verbatim statement. The remaining third (57) of the items were opinion, 26 editorials, 14 columns, 12 letters-to-the-editor, and five cartoons.

Over 60 percent of all items, except letters, were printed in Period 1. Most letters were written in Period 2, more than a month after the initial announcement of the Council. Only two kinds of items, news stories and editorials, were published in Period 3.

Most publications carried all kinds of items with the exception of news features. The news features, an accepted magazine style which provides more in-depth reporting, appeared only in Alberta Report and the Toronto Globe and Mail. Interestingly, more editorials than news stories were clipped from the 11 weekly newspapers.

News items drew primarily from the Minister, the ATA and other sources whereas opinion items were written mainly from background information.

News about the Council appeared on the front page and in the first section of the papers about 75 percent of the time. The Council was a front page item 16.9 percent of the time during Period 1, dropping to 10.5 percent in Period 2, and peaking at 18.2 percent in Period 3. It was consistently a front section news item about 60 percent of the time in all periods.

Small city dailies seem to have given the debate about the Council better position than did large city dailies. This was probably a function of the size of the publications. Of the weekly publications reported the majority of items appeared on the front page or in the first section.

The ATA appear to have received better positioning than the Minister. Over 75 percent of the items with the ATA as a source made the first page and first section of newspapers while 60 percent of the items with the Minister as a source received similar positioning.

The longest items were during the height of the controversy in Period 1 while the shortest dealt with the reconciliation and announcement of Council members in Period 3.

Large city dailies ran the shortest items, small city dailies the next longest, weeklies the next, and other publications the longest. Features were longer than opinion; opinion was longer than news. Most items in the dailies were news stories. Most items in weeklies were opinion in the form of editorials or letters. Most in the other publications were news features.

Items with the Minister alone as a source were shortest while the ATA alone and other sources alone averaged the same length and background information alone were the longest.

As might be expected, items progressively got smaller as they were relegated toward the back of the newspapers.

Of the 171 items, 22 strongly favored the Minister (+2), 27 favored the minister (+1), 48 were neutral (0), 55 favored the ATA (-1), and 19 strongly favored the ATA (-2). The mean suggested the overall coverage favored the ATA. Coverage in Period 1 favored the ATA, while coverage in Period 2 and Period 3 was fairly balanced.

As a group, coverage in small city dailies showed the strongest support for the ATA, followed next by large city dailies. The notable exception was the Edmonton Sun

which overall came out in favor of the Minister. Coverage in the weeklies and other publications was very close to balanced.

As would be anticipated, when the Minister was the only source, the coverage favored the Minister and, when the ATA was the only source, the coverage favored the ATA. When the Minister was combined with the ATA as sources, overall the coverage favored the ATA.

Overall, news items favored the ATA while opinion items favored the minister. The notable exception was letters which favored the ATA.

ATA viewpoint dominated the front pages and first sections. Items appearing in the middle section were much closer to neutral while those appearing in the back section favored the minister. There seemed to be little difference in length between viewpoints.

This quantitative analysis of the content of items has provided a broad perspective of the media coverage of the debate about the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards. A qualitative analysis of content, augmented by comments from interviews with the participants, is found in the next chapter and will provide more in-depth findings about the events and media coverage.

Chapter 6

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF PRINT MEDIA COVERAGE AND INTERVIEWEE OBSERVATIONS

This chapter provides an account of the public debate about the formation of the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards (COATS), documented by newspaper coverage, the observations of the participants in the events as well as official documents. Both the media's record and the participants' accounts are presented so as to facilitate sound judgment about the realities of that time and to show how well the print media covered the COATS story. News coverage is described in three periods: the first showing extensive coverage of the controversy over COATS; the second indicating a growing lack of interest by the press while behind the scenes lobbying and negotiations occurred; and the third showing a renewed interest by the media with the announcements of compromise and reconciliation.

Period 1. Confrontation

This period began March 29, 1985 and lasted until the first serious negotiations took place during the week prior to April 30. It was a period of confrontation between the Minister of Education, David King, and the executive and members of the Alberta Teachers' Association, described by one columnist as "general downright foolishness" (Calgary Sun, April 12, 1985, p.4).

Announcement of the Council

Although the Minister made the announcement of the Council on Friday morning, March 29 in the legislature, the first indication in public that the Council would be formed was made in the Speech from the Throne two weeks earlier (Alberta Hansard, March 14, 1985, p. 3). The Speech from the Throne contained the following statements:

> Last year the need for teacher evaluation policies was addressed. This was only the first of a number of steps related to professional development of teachers. In 1985 a new Commission (sic) of Alberta Teachers will be organized to establish and maintain standards for and conditions of teacher certification and discipline.

In the legislature March 29 (Alberta Hansard, p. 274), Mr. King outlined the background of the Council, described its role, and explained its composition. He indicated that, since the dissolution of the Board of Teacher Education and Certification (BTEC) in 1983, educational groups had "more than once" asked for the formation of a replacement. The Council, he said, would "fulfill the successor role," providing advice to the Minister in a number of areas, including:

> 1. programs for the preparation of teachers, and the requirements for Alberta teaching certificates;
> 2. conditions under which suspension or cancellation of certificates is justified;
> 3. certain specific short-term projects, including providing direction for implementation and evaluation of the initiation to teaching project, which some may recognize as being very much like an internship;
> 4. policy, practice, and outcomes in the area of teacher evaluation.

He said that certified Alberta teachers would make up six of the 11 members of the Council; four other members would come from the Alberta School Trustees' Association, the government of Alberta, the faculties of education, and the Conference of Alberta School Superintendents; and one would be selected from the public at large.

In response to the Ministerial statement, Ray Martin, Leader of the Opposition, pointed out what he said were "some real problems" with the Council (Alberta Hansard, March 29, 1985, p. 274).

> It seems somewhat out of sync with the government's own policy on professions, governing themselves. When we look at who is there, the minister will appoint six currently certified teachers, but the ATA can only nominate one -- it doesn't even say they would get one -- and four other members will be appointed, but they'll be nominated from the other groups. It seems to me that the potential is there for the minister to control the whole group, because he is the one who ultimately has the say on who is going to be on this committee.
>
> It seems to be moving away from what the government talks about, in the fact that this is government intervention, I suggest -- a move away from deregulation, but in regulation with the government being all-powerful and controlling teacher certification. It looks to me as if this is going to be a very powerful group when they are nominated, because they seem to have

> wide-ranging scope into almost all areas of the teaching profession. I think the minister would agree that who chooses these members becomes very critical.

Only one publication reported the story that day. The afternoon Edmonton Journal (March 29, 1985) carried the story as straight news, describing the purpose and makeup of the Council with only one comment from ATA President Nadene Thomas. Under a headline "Teacher body to set standards," Cathy Lord of the Journal indicated the Council would advise King "about teacher education and certification."

Taken directly from an Alberta Education news release (March 29, 1985), the article quoted Minister of Education David King:

> "Through this council, I will be looking at teacher competency and professional activities related to improving teaching in Alberta.
>
> Practising teachers will hold the majority of membership on the 11-member council," said King. "The result is that teachers will have a greater opportunity to provide input on professional matters such as teacher preparation, certification and decertification."

One paragraph quoted Nadene Thomas saying the ATA Provincial Executive Council "did not take kindly" to the proposal and "was not complimentary to the minister."

ATA Reaction to the Announcement

In stories beginning March 30th, the print media were quick to pick up on ATA officials' angry reaction to the announcement of the Council. No longer were the comments moderated in terms like "did not take kindly" or "was not complimentary." Rather, typical of the teachers' expressions were headlines such as "King blasted for lateral run at ATA" (Edmonton Journal, March 30, 1985, p. B1), "Panel makeup insulting, claims ATA president" (Calgary Herald, March 30, 1985, p. B1), "Dave King after control, teachers say" (Medicine Hat News, March 30, 1985, p. A3).

Nadene Thomas was quoted in the Edmonton Journal (March 30, 1985, B1), claiming that the Council is a "beautiful job of political manipulation.... All he had to do was make the announcement and that's it. He did not take it to cabinet. It's the most undemocratic thing I've ever heard of."

She was quoted in the Calgary Herald (March 30, 1985, p. B1) as stating that David King was "undermining the ATA by allowing only one representative--who must meet his approval--on the 11-member board." The story went on, indicating that "the ATA is also disturbed the council is taking away the powers of discipline that have resided with the association."

In the Medicine Hat News (March 30, 1985, p. A3), Nadene Thomas was quoted as claiming that David King was "using 'a side door' to take control of the teaching profession." The article continued:

> "I see it as very much a political move on his part," Thomas said Friday, in a telephone interview from her Edmonton office....
>
> Thomas said the move to establish the Council has been done without the approval of teachers, even though King has promised the ATA "time and time again," that he would make no move without its consent.
>
> Thomas said an earlier promise to teachers that he would do nothing to restructure aspects of the teaching profession without the approval of the teachers' governing body.
>
> By setting up this advisory Council, King "is taking away the control of teachers over their own profession," she said.
>
> "He is in total control," she added, noting that the Council is only an advisory body and its members are chosen by King.
>
> "We can nominate someone, but if he doesn't like them he can choose who he likes," she said. "We can advise on policy, but only advise, he can do what he likes," she said.

The Lethbridge Herald (March 30, 1985, p. A3), on the other hand, ran a story favoring the Council, entitled "Local boards support council to monitor teaching standard."

On March 31, in a column in the Edmonton Sun, Don Wanagas shed further light on the ATA' s reaction and also imputed motives to David King's announcement. He indicated that "King had barely sat down following his announcement of the teaching standards council than there was an administrative assistant from the Alberta Teachers' Association prancing through the legislature press gallery handing out a press release that dumped all over the minister's proposal."

From the press release Wanagas quoted:

> "The minister appears to be more concerned with his personal political timetable than with the maintenance and improvement in public education in the province," protested ATA president Nadene Thomas. "That

> the announcement should be made on the eve of the Progressive Conservative party's annual convention is the most blatant example of cynical and calculated media manipulation that I have ever witnessed."

Wanagas obviously agreed with this assessment, indicating:

> ...it was no big surprise when Education Minister Dave King stood up in the Legislature Friday morning and, in effect, started waving his arms and hollering 'Me too! Pay some attention to me! I want to be premier too!'
>
> That's just how thinly disguised was King's announcement of a new Council on Alberta Teaching Standards.
>
> The education minister wants so badly to live up to his family name that he dreams out loud about the day Lougheed will announce his retirement and makes King's coronation a possibility. And there was absolutely no way King was going to let this weekend's Alberta Progressive Conservative convention go by with everybody just talking up Prince Zaozirny's new improved political fortunes over the inevitable rye-and-gingers. King's name had to make its way into the banter too, somehow. And the talk had better be about more than his latest perm.

This theme of David King using teachers as pawns in his campaign for the premiership was virtually ignored by the other news media, although ATA President Nadene Thomas continued to believe it was the Minister's primary motive, even two years later (Interview, April 14, 1987):

> He made no secret of the fact when he talked to us about things that he intended to become leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and eventually premier. He would drop hints about how things were going to go. The implications always were that when he was premier of the province that he would have such control that we should know what side our bread was buttered on. This actually began from the very beginning of our meetings with him back in 1980 when he produced his first version of the Teaching Profession Act.... You see that he was purposely trying to use the mass media for his purpose of becoming the leader of the PCs.

At the first of the week, the ATA executive called a press conference. Although she used the press release to suggest political motives to the Minister, the ATA President also accused King of "union busting." It was this theme the Edmonton Journal (April 2, 1985, p. B8) picked up on. "He hopes to destroy the association so that teachers won't bargain through their locals," she was quoted as saying.

Minister's Rebuttal

The ATA seemed to be dominating the news pages. Then, in response to questions in the legislature on Monday, April 1, Mr. King said teachers shouldn't be given

professional status on a par with doctors and lawyers. "Basically, they are arguing that they should be organized like every other profession. That argument assumes they are like every other profession. I think they are not," he said in an interview later with the Calgary Herald (April 2, 1985, p. A10).

Quoted verbatim in the Edmonton Journal (April 9, 1985; see Alberta Hansard, April 1, 1985, p. 295), the statement said:

> Particularly , unlike other professions the clients of teachers are exclusively children unable to protect themselves ... the statements of children are given very little weight against the statements of adults in any case where there is conflict.
>
> Secondly, unlike other professions the practice of teaching is not subject to very much reliable evaluation and the outcome is very much delayed.... Third, nobody else goes to a professional because the law tells them they are obliged to do it. If a person were dying of cancer, there is no law that would oblige him to go to a doctor....
>
> Fourth, unlike other professions this practice is carried on exclusively in a condition of an employee/employer relationship. Fifth, the delivery model is one to many rather than one to one. Sixth, the range of choice available to people is very narrow.

In the legislature (Alberta Hansard, April 1, 1985, p. 294), Mr. King also said that at least one percent of the 28,000 teachers in the province do a disservice to their profession and should be fired. This was reported a number of times in the Calgary Herald (April 2, 1985, p. A10; April 7, 1985, p. A4, April 14, 1985, p. B1; April 15, 1985).

Mr. King (Alberta Hansard, April 1, pp. 293, 294; Edmonton Journal, April 1, 1985, p. B8) also pointed out that he had tried several times to revise the Teaching Profession Act, but was unsuccessful.

> The first of these attempts was in 1981, and it was rejected by the Alberta Teachers' Association. The second attempt was in the spring of 1984, and it was rejected by the Alberta School Trustees' Association. The third attempt was during the winter and early spring of 1985. I have recently received a letter from the president of the Alberta Teachers' Association, advising that they believe it is not possible to successfully conclude negotiations on a new Teaching Profession Act at this time....
>
> When I dissolved the Board of Teacher Education and Certification in September 1983, I announced that I was doing that for about 15 months so that there would be a window for successfully negotiating a new Teaching Profession Act. I advised all the interested parties at that time that if negotiations for a new Teaching Profession Act were not successful, I

would reconstitute a successor to the Board of Teacher Education and Certification.

That evening Mr. King attended a meeting of ATA local presidents at the ATA headquarters in Edmonton, Barnett House. He described his experience in detail in the House the next day (Alberta Hansard, April 2, 1987, p. 326). Subsequent media coverage was embarrassing for the ATA. The Edmonton Sun (April 3, 1985, p. 13) told how ATA President Nadene Thomas invited the Minister to a meeting of local presidents Monday, April 1, but "when he arrived [he] was told he was only there to listen, not to speak." After several executive members criticized the Council, Mr. King "asked for a chance to defend himself. When that was greeted with uncomfortable silence, the meeting chairman said the ATA obviously didn't want to hear the minister" (Calgary Herald, April 6, 1985, p. A3).

Rich Vivone (Interview, March 24, 1987), Mr. King's executive assistant, described the incident from his viewpoint:

> The ATA executive invited him to come over so he could hear what they had on their minds. Reno Bosetti and I came along. It went on for about a half hour or 45 minutes. It was obvious to me that the ATA didn't intend to let David participate. But, at one point David said, "I just cannot let this go on. I'm going to ask if I can speak, even if it is just to answer questions." He got up and walked to the mike. I looked at Reno and he looked at me and I said, "This guy is nuts." He asked if he could speak and they put the question to the floor. When the question was put to the floor, an entire row of teachers got up to leave. When the vote went against David, they sat down. He came back to me and said, "I guess it is over." So we got up and walked out. And that was the end of that.

Mrs. Thomas (Interview, April 14, 1987) later recounted her side of the story:

> When I invited the Minister to attend, I told him that it was a meeting we were going to have with our local presidents, but if he wanted to come and hear what I was saying ... then he was welcome....
>
> When I met him at the door, I said to him again that he was here as a guest and was going to be able to hear but was not permitted to speak. When he tried to do so, of course, the local presidents were not interested because ... I had explained to them why he was there. It came as no surprise to him, although when he reported it to the media he denied this.

The incident was to resurface again in the press two weeks later when Mr. King refused to attend the ATA Annual Representative Assembly (Edmonton Journal, April 12, 1985; Calgary Herald, April 12, 1985).

Minister's Attempt to Bypass the ATA

On April 2 the Department of Education sent a letter to all teachers explaining the reasons for the Council and asking for teacher nominations. This letter and a leaked memo, saying that the Minister would bypass the ATA if necessary, further agitated the ATA executive and provided them more grist for the news media mill (Edmonton Journal, April 4, 1985, p. B1; Calgary Herald, April 4, 1985, p. B10; Medicine Hat News, April 4, 1985, p. A3).

The memo dated March 29 and addressed to Premier Peter Lougheed and to government caucus members stated:

> My office has a list of the name and home address of every teacher in the province. We are ready to do a mass mailing if necessary, on extremely short notice. In the event that any unreasonable opposition arises, we will be able to go past the ATA to its members (quoted in the Edmonton Journal, April 4, 1985, p. B1).

The letter was sent out the day following Mr. King's attendance at the meeting of the local presidents of the ATA. Mailed to Alberta's teachers, it asked for their support for the Council.

> Ideally, responsibilities for certification, decertification and judging competence should be included in a Teaching Profession Act (TPA). Unfortunately during the past five years, three attempts to revise the TPA have been unsuccessful.
>
> A new TPA must represent a meeting of the minds of the interested parties. I will continue to look for this. In the meantime, the public is no longer satisfied with the status quo (quoted in the Edmonton Journal, April 4, 1985, p. B1).

In six years as Minister the April 2 letter was the first time Mr. King had written to all Alberta teachers. "There are very few questions that are as important as this to the education of children and the professional status of teachers," he told the House (Alberta Hansard, April 3, 1985, p. 344).

Mrs. Thomas said Mr. King should have saved the government postage for the letters to the teachers and talked "to the people who have been elected to represent them--

the ATA. He refuses to admit that the ATA represents teachers and we have the right in law of doing so."

Reflecting back on this incident, Dr. Reno Bosetti (Interview, March 27, 1987) said:

> Writing letters to individual teachers ... incensed the situation even more. Basically what we found is that we don't have the capacity to communicate with teachers. We are hostage to what the ATA tells teachers or with what the media translates our communication to be.
>
> The attempt we made was to say the ATA is not communicating the government's position adequately; the media certainly isn't. So Mr. King said, "We'll write directly to teachers." It went over like a lead balloon. It was frustrating... to be unable to communicate with teachers.
>
> There was a feeling that teachers in the field were more supportive of what the Minister was doing than the ATA as an association. The ATA did whatever it could to prove that was wrong. Their interest was in saying that the ATA represents Alberta teachers and there is no other vehicle for getting the views of teachers.... We contend that the ATA view is not always supported by teachers..., but we have no way of getting to teachers to really assess what their views are. And indeed when we get into a conflict, teachers become unwilling to be dragged into a situation where they seem to be at variance with their own association. One of the most difficult areas of communication is with members of associations such as the ATA because they are very powerful, very well organized, and they rally around the cause with just amazing adeptness.

The ATA executive sent out a special edition of the ATA News (April 3, 1985) to inform teachers of their views and to condemn the Council. Blazoned across the front was the title, "King sidesteps teachers' association." In the newsletter was the ATA's own chronology of the formation of the Council, including an account of their own efforts to form the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education (ACOTE). This suggested committee never seems to have surfaced in the public debate of COATS in the regular media.

In the House on April 3 (Alberta Hansard, April 3, 1985, pp. 343, 344), Mr. King was questioned about the reasons for the letter he had sent out the day previously and for not attempting further negotiations with the ATA. Mr. King retorted:

> The reaction of the Alberta Teachers' Association on Friday did not suggest that they were interested in any further discussions. Certainly, when I became aware of the fact that they were printing a special edition of the ATA News, which is being sent out to every teacher in the province, and in light of my experience on Monday afternoon, I must confess that I didn't consider the likelihood of discussion as being very fruitful.

Continuation of the Controversy

Thus, the battle of words continued. Education reporter Sheila Pratt in a column in the Calgary Herald (April 6, 1985, p. A3) may have expressed public sentiment when she stated: "What's shocking and worrisome is how fast both sides were at each other's throats without any reasonable dialogue." She apparently did not recognize this was a continuing story, tied to the long debate about a new Teaching Profession Act and that COATS was the result of a failure to arrive at agreement over the Act.

Representative of the bad feelings between the ATA and the Minister is Rich Vivone's (Interview, March 24, 1987) description of a meeting between the Minister and the ATA executive prior to the announcement:

> One of the executive said, "You know David I really think that you are a wicked and evil man." It surprised me because he was an old friend and he knew David well also. That was the tone of the whole meeting.
>
> The ATA wrote up the minutes for that meeting and distributed them in spite of the fact that this meeting was confidential. Several days later, an ATA member privately phoned me about a copy he had received. He read parts to me to get my reaction. He later sent me a copy of what the ATA sent to their local executives. I compared it with my notes and the minutes were very selective. At that point you get pretty upset about things.

The ATA viewpoint seemed to dominate small city dailies. Lea Belter, president of the Ft. McMurray local of the ATA, was paraphrased as saying that Mr. King was "trying to snuff out the association by giving the new council power that, in the past, has been exclusive to the ATA" (Ft. McMurray Today, April 3, 1985, p. 1). She was quoted as saying that the ATA was "insulted" by Mr. King's decision. "We can discipline our own members," she said. "Mr. King is trying to more or less destroy us. But we're just not going to stand for it."

In the Medicine Hat News (April 4, 1985, p.A3), Mrs. Thomas was quoted as saying that there was no doubt in her mind that Mr. King's purpose was to "undermine" the ATA. Although Mr. King had authority in certification, she said he did not have an "exclusive role" in misconduct hearings, teacher evaluation and questions of competency. The Council, she said, is "a way to subvert the law of the province."

Up to this point approximately 35 stories and editorials had been published province-wide about the Council. At this juncture, former MLA Ron Ghitter, who had headed the Committee on Tolerance and Understanding for King, entered the fray on the side of the teachers. In a telephone interview with the Calgary Herald (April 13, 1985, p. A1), he expressed surprise that King should on one hand endorse the committee's recommendation for a council without government involvement, and then establish a board that bore "no resemblance" to the one proposed. Thirteen items, including six editorials and columns, mentioned and some gave support to Ghitter's viewpoint. No articles pointed out that the ATA had previously rejected Ghitter's model when it was proposed in 1984 (ATA News Release, November 1, 1984; cited in Alberta Hansard, April 1, 1985, p. 294). Ghitter, who was later to become a contender against King in the bid for the province's premiership, timed his comments to coincide with the ATA Annual Representative Assembly from April 11 to 13 in Edmonton.

Annual Representative Assembly

During the convention and during the week following, 22 items were published about the convention and teacher plans for action. Others were published about followup local teacher meetings (Ft.McMurray Today, April 17, 1985, p. 1; Grande Prairie Herald-Tribune, April 17, 1985, p. 1). The convention was successful in turning much of the media coverage to the ATA viewpoint in spite of several editorials giving teachers low marks for poor behavior at the convention.

Much of the debate at the convention and almost all the print coverage dealt with the Minister's breaking with tradition by refusing an invitation to address the opening session (Calgary Herald, April 11, 1985, p. A6; Edmonton Sun, April 11, 1985; Edmonton Sun, April 12, 1985; Calgary Sun, April 12, 1985; Calgary Herald, April 12, 1985; Edmonton Journal, April 12, 1985, Medicine Hat News, April 13, 1985, p. A4; Calgary Herald, April 14, 1985, p. B1, Edmonton Sun, April 14, 1985, pp. 10, 13; Calgary Sun, April 14, 1985; Calgary Sun, April 17, 1985, p. 16; Edmonton Sun, April 17, 1985, p. 19). In a column Peter Stockland of the Edmonton Sun (April 15, 1985, p. 11) wrote that "delegates publicly embarrassed themselves with a silly bid to score a picayune political point at King's expense." He quoted one delegate as saying, "Let's invite him again so the public can watch him turn us down twice in one week." Other articles indicated that delegates called him a "spoiled child," "petty," "a self-serving politician," and "his 'holy' presence" (Edmonton Journal, April 12, 1985; Calgary Herald, April 12, 1985). The delegates voted two-to-one to invite him to reconsider and to attend the convention. An Edmonton Sun editorial (April 14, 1985, p. 10) pointed out that Mr. King had attended a meeting of the ATA local presidents on April 1 and "was insulted and embarrassed for his trouble."

> At that meeting he wasn't allowed to speak. He wasn't allowed to respond to the criticisms aimed at him and his policies. When he asked to speak -- he was told to sit down.
>
> He should have been prepared for that, suggested ATA president Nadene Thomas. He was invited to listen, not to speak, she pointed out at the time.
>
> Silly Dave, eh? He made the mistake of thinking he'd been invited to meet with people [who] would surely allow him the simple courtesy of responding to criticism.
>
> And the ATA seriously expected King to show up at the convention for more of the same abuse?
>
> Come on! He's a politician, Alberta's minister of education -- not a doormat.
>
> It's the ATA which has taken this debate down to the level of name-calling and attempts at personal humiliation. It can hardly complain when King declines to join them in the basement.

ATA President Nadene Thomas (Edmonton Sun, April 14, 1985, p. 13) indicated that Mr. King's decision to not attend was probably wise:

> Thomas said "discretion apparently prevailed over "valor" in King's decision not to attend the boisterous meeting, which attacked his proposals for reviewing teacher competency.
>
> She said teachers would have been "much happier" if King had attended -- but welcomed the minister's alternative offer to meet with the teachers' executive in the near future.
>
> King made the offer after refusing two invitations to meet the teachers en masse.
>
> Delegates to the ATA's 68th annual convention had said earlier they felt "snubbed and insulted" by King's refusal.
>
> And they voted overwhelmingly to send him a letter demanding he attend the convention to explain himself.
>
> King had initially accepted an invitation from the ATA president to bring government greetings to the gathering, but ministerial aide Randy Atkinson said the tense mood between King and the ATA would it "two-faced" for him to attend the convention on behalf of the government.

Although most articles described other aspects of the debate about COATS, only one article (Medicine Hat News, April 12, 1985, p.A3) made no reference to Mr. King's failure to show. This article referred to the delegates' "challenge to King to change his plans for a council on Alberta teaching standards" :

> In a series of resolutions passed today and Thursday, teachers are saying they cannot accept an advisory council to deal with matters of their professionalism which is handpicked by the minister and not responsible to other teachers through the Alberta Teachers' Association.

Apparently during the convention, the government made an offer to let the ATA fill all teacher seats in return for the ATA's support of the Council (Alberta Report, April 22, 1985, p. 42). It wasn't clear however who had made the offer, whether it was from Mr. King or from senior officials of Alberta Education.

Ministerial Initiatives

Following the ATA Annual Representative Assembly, Mr. King took the initiative explaining the reasons for the Council and the potential for a new Teaching Profession Act. One article indicated that he felt it would be 1988, following the next election, before a new Teaching Profession Act could be introduced into the legislature (Calgary Herald, April 17, 1985, p. A3). Thus, COATS was necessary in order to "conduct practice reviews" in the meantime.

Under attack from the opposition in the legislature (Calgary Herald, April 18, 1985, p. A14, Hansard, April 17, 1985, p. 438), Mr. King said that it was because of the ATA that COATS was necessary. Mr. King asked the opposition MLA:

> Having tried four times in five years to get a a new Teaching Profession Act and having failed four times, three of them on the decision of the Alberta Teachers' Association, how much longer should I wait for the ATA? ... I have only reached the point of saying that in the absence of progress, I am no longer willing to leave certain important questions sitting on a back burner. I will deal with these important questions in another way as an interim measure, and that interim measure will stand until we are able to make progress on a new Teaching Profession Act.

Continuing his initiative, Mr. King (Edmonton Journal, April 18, 1985, p. D7) indicated that it was too late for the ATA to stop COATS. The Council "is going to be established," he said, adding that the nomination process was well under way.

Then on April 19 the Minister, in the Calgary Sun (p. 14) and Edmonton Sun (p.24), announced a meeting for Friday, April 26 with the ATA executive. In the meantime, Mr. King toured the province speaking in favor of the Council on local talk shows in Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer and Grande Prairie (Rich Vivone, Interview, March 24, 1987). "It was really quite amazing," said Rich Vivone, David King's executive assistant. "I remember on the way back from one of [the open line shows] we talked about the fact that nobody cared [about the Council]. People would talk about everything else in education.... People either didn't care or they agreed with [the Council]." In addition, Mr. King held meetings with editorial staffs in Red Deer and Grande Prairie.

The Minister also accepted an invitation from ATA members in Wetaskiwin to present his views before teachers in that city at a meeting with local MLA Don Sparrow on April 24 (Wetaskiwin News Advertiser, April 30, 1985, p. 1; Wetaskiwin Times, May 1, 1985). This meeting was followed by others, whenever Mr. King received a special invitation like the one from John Ware Junior High School in Calgary (David King, Letter to Allan B. Cuppy, Principal, May 31, 1985).

On April 20 the Toronto Globe and Mail ran its only piece about the controversy, also describing in the same article difficulties the Alberta government was having with doctors over fees. While the issue concerning doctors' fees received minimal coverage in Alberta, it dominated the first part of the Globe and Mail article. Also on April 20 the Calgary Herald (p. A5) ran an article about a speech by its publisher, Patrick Callaghan, who claimed that Mr. King's "bitter feud" with teachers had hurt his chances for the Conservative Party leadership. Subsequent articles (Calgary Herald, April 23, 1985, p. B3; Medicine Hat News, April 25, p. A3) highlighted the confrontation between the Minister and the ATA, Mr. King claiming the Council would go ahead and that letters and telephone calls were 9-to-1 in favor, and Mrs. Thomas attempting to convince King to withdraw his plans.

On April 24 the Sherwood Parks News, a community newspaper, reported a claim by local ATA president Jim Kuzyk that teachers were "getting [a] raw deal from the media in their latest dispute with education minister Dave King." He said teachers were frustrated with media reports that failed to clarify the ATA's stand on the issue.

ATA Information Meetings

As early as April 10 (J.F. Berlando, ATA Memo to Association Consultants), the ATA had scheduled member information meetings throughout the province for the latter part of April and early May. Dr. Bernie Keeler, executive secretary of the ATA (ATA memo entitled "Now why did you call this meeting?" no date), indicated that the meetings were scheduled because of the "impossibility of keeping members informed through normal channels when developments are erratic, unpredictable and may demand immediate response." The major issue, he wrote, was the "right of teachers to participate collectively in educational decision-making ... through an organization of their own design and choosing." He continued:

> The minister of education, trying to "leave his mark on education," has generated an unprecedented number of issues, studies, proposals and reports. Although other major interest groups privately confess to the same frustrations as do teachers and Association officials, only the ATA has been willing to say "the emperor has no clothes"; that is, to state publicly that some of the minister's proposals are just plain wrong and unacceptable.
>
> As a result, he has identified "the ATA" as the enemy, the problem. To do this he has attempted to personify the organization and to promote the idea that it has a will which is independent of the teacher members.... This ploy of painting the ATA as the villain is the smokescreen that covers the minister's destruction of a system of meaningful consultation.

At the meetings members were given packets, containing an ATA version of the chronology of events leading to the establishment of COATS, a description of the nature of COATS and the changes and new principles established through the Council. "COATS will establish an excellent mechanism to conduct witch hunts," said the documents. "Teachers, acting collectively, will have no way of influencing COATS even though there is majority teacher representation. Parents or students, acting individually, will have an interesting avenue to protest unpopular professional judgment made in the best interests of students."

Also a part of the packet were a list of follow-up activities recommended by Dr. Nick Hrynyk, assistant executive secretary of the ATA. The list included the following suggestions for individual and group member action:

a) letters to MLAs, the premier, Dave King.

b) attend constituency nominating meetings, recruit other teachers to attend meetings and select favorable Conservative candidates.

c) recruit retired teachers and friends to write letters and make phone calls.

d) organize groups of members to meet with MLAs to present points of view.

Also suggested were the following activities to be implemented by the Alberta Teachers' Association:

a) one or two mass meetings of members as appropriate.

b) blitz of news releases and local press conferences.

c) demand resignation of the Minister, possibly through a mass write-in campaign.

d) demonstration, march or rally at the legislature, involving one day work stoppage.

e) mass resignations.

f) instruct teachers to work to rule.

g) advise teachers to boycott Department of Education work (which includes the grading of departmental exams, work on curriculum committees, etc.)

h) hold a referendum of members on the issue.

On the day of the meeting between the Minister and the ATA five items in three different papers (Calgary Sun, April 26, 1985, pp. 4,10; Edmonton Sun, April 26, 1985, p. 4; and the Medicine Hat News, April 26, 1985, p. A3) revealed what was described by ATA officials as a "working paper" about job action that could be taken to stop COATS. The articles described the suggestions which were part of the member information packets, including mass resignations, working-to-rule, work stoppages and a boycott of Department of Education activities. The articles also included the suggestions of "infiltrating the Tory party," of a write-in campaign to demand King's removal as Minister, and of a letter-writing campaign to MLAs.

Rich Vivone (Interview, March 24, 1987) described how the "working paper" got into the press:

> We had all these espionage things happening. Into the office comes a piece of paper. It was the result of an ATA brain storming session. There were some pretty rough things on it: province-wide work-to-rule and all this other garbage. It really was rough. I drove over to the ATA and went to see Nick Hrynyk and I said, "Does this stuff belong to you?" And he said, "Yes, it's ours." I put it into my pocket and I left.
>
> A day later it was in the newspapers. I didn't do it but I arranged to have it done, because I thought that someone would have a vested interest in it.... We were very upset about the kinds of things they were talking about because by this time this whole thing had been blown well out of proportion. Way out of proportion.

Meeting of the Minister and the ATA

In spite of publicity about this leaked document, the April 26 meeting of the Minister and the ATA executive went ahead. At the meeting both parties exchanged position papers. The ATA paper ("The Alberta Teachers' Association Submission to the Minister of

Education," April 26, 1985) included the relevant resolutions passed earlier by the Annual Representative Assembly:

> 1. That all members on advisory committees representing the profession be named by the Association.
> 2. That practice review be a function carried out by the profession, with adequate provision for appropriate public involvement.
> 3. That the ATA establish a mechanism to deal with teacher practice review, such a mechanism to provide for (a) investigation of allegations of unskilled practice by a teacher and (b) the power to impose sanctions, including conditions upon a member's entitlement to continue to teach.
> 4. That the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards is unacceptable because
> (a) its advisory status leaves the minister in unfettered control;
> (b) although advisory, its frame of reference appears to permit it inappropriate administrative and quasi-judicial powers;
> (c) its proposed powers infringe on the Association's legally established responsibility for professional discipline;
> (d) its is not a representative body, as all members would be appointees of the minister;
> (e) it fails to serve the public interest by ignoring the teaching profession's willingness to take full responsibility for member practice and conduct.
> 5. That unless the minister revises the Council to an acceptable form, the Association take the following steps:
> (a) refuse any participation in the Council and recommend to members that they refuse to participate;
> (b) seek legal recourse in instances where the Council infringes on the rights of the Association and of individual teachers established under law.
> 6. That the Provincial Executive Council be authorized to negotiate a new Teaching Profession Act.
> 7. That the ATA take action to oppose strongly any attempt by the Government of Alberta to force the concept of organizational duality upon the Association.

Afterward both parties were "tight-lipped" about the discussions. The ATA executive went away with a proposal from the minister to discuss at their Executive Council meeting May 3 and 4 (Calgary Herald, April 27, 1985, p. A1; Edmonton Journal, April 27, 1985, p.F8). Media items up until the end of the period on April 30, 1985 de[illegible] with the King proposal as well as the ATA job action plan.

Toward the end of this period, columnist Glenn Martin (Edmonton Sun, April 22, 1985) gave his assessment of the controversy between Mr. King and the ATA:

> The confrontation between the minister of education and the ATA is a small but crucial battle in the war to decide who will run the province's educational system: the people or the educational establishment.
>
> The Honorable Dave King is not a part of that establishment.
>
> ... the appointment [of Mr. King] was a stroke of genius. King's lack of background and his indifference to the nuances and traditions of the china shop of education are his greatest assets as minister.... King, being neither a lawyer nor an educator, preserved a native wit and courage that are usually ground out of people by the process of higher education....
>
> He is not paralysed, like so many in high office, by the fear of making mistakes. He has made plenty -- most recently, the bad timing that led to his announcement of his new advisory-council plan, on the eve of the PC convention. This looked cynical and expedient at the time, but who even remembers it now? At other times the minister has put out trial balloons, like his proposal a year ago for a new pattern of teacher education, from which he had to beat a hasty retreat. These are always tentative, and he cuts his losses fast.
>
> But the ultimate confrontation with the vested interests is not one that any amount of nimbleness can really avoid. Either King is going to make a major change in Alberta's educational system or he's not.

Period 2. Consolidation

Forty-two items (24.6 percent) were published during the seven-week period from May 1 to June 18, 1985, 32 in the first two weeks, nine during the rest of May and only one in the first 18 days of June. It was a period of consolidation of positions, one in which the ATA executive used other means rather than the news media to reach teachers and to make their viewpoint heard in government. During the period the media gradually lost interest in the story.

Continuing Coverage of Confrontation

On May 5 the Calgary Herald led on page one with a story entitled "ATA halts truce." The article indicated that the ATA executive was planning to notify the Minister Monday of their rejection of his proposal. The executive refused to elaborate on the nature of King's proposal, indicating only that it did not make the necessary compromises.

Instead the ATA executive had indicated a desire to reopen negotiations on the Teaching Profession Act, which Mr. King said he was willing to do (Edmonton Sun, May 7, 1985, p.15), although he would go ahead with the Council without an ATA representative (Edmonton Journal, May 7, 1985, p. B10; Calgary Herald, May 7, 1985;

May 8, 1985, p. F9). Mr. King rejected a suggestion [by the media] that he reopen negotiations on the Council "to clear the atmosphere."

"The principal reason for this atmosphere is the media," Mr. King said. "As in all things, the media has an interest in maintaining the life of it" (Calgary Herald, May 8, 1985, p.F9).

In response to the Minister's boast that he would go ahead without the ATA, Mrs. Thomas (Calgary Herald, May 7, 1985, p. B5) warned that the first case heard by the Council would likely be challenged in court. She indicated that Mr. King did not have the authority to establish the Council because it has "quasi-judicial powers" which must be approved by the legislature. She also said that the Minister was contravening the Teaching Profession Act, which gives discipline powers to the ATA.

On May 7 (Edmonton Sun, p. 15) Mrs. Thomas indicated that the ATA was organizing teachers to begin "blitzing" the Minister with letters and phone calls to oppose the Council. In an article on May 8 (p. D18), the Calgary Herald reported a meeting where local ATA representatives outlined the associations' strategy "to bog down the provincial Department of Education with hundreds of letters and phone calls." The article noted that 75 meetings were planned for May across the province and each teacher was sent a package entitled "Professional Survival Kit," outlining the ATA's stand and encouraging the write-in campaign.

An article in the Edmonton Journal on May 8 (p. B3) indicated that a letter released May 7 and discussed in the House (Alberta Hansard, May 7, 1985, pp. 835, 836) revealed that on April 26 Mr. King asked the ATA "to affirm a list of principles for the Council."

> One suggested principle says that until a new teaching professions act is adopted "there is a need for the minister to develop and administer comprehensive, constructive and effective policy, programs and administrative procedures that address certification, decertification and properly related matters."
>
> But the ATA response acknowledged only that "there is a need for the minister to administer certification and decertification matters."
>
> King called this a "significant omission" and Thomas said King's version would give the education minister too much power.

Also in the House (Alberta Hansard, May 7, 1985, pp. 835, 836), Mr. King indicated that if a new Teaching Profession Act were negotiated, the Council would almost certainly "cease functioning" and he reiterated his willingness to negotiate with the ATA "if the ATA wants to talk about these things." But, he said he was "not going to go looking for more talks."

Further questioning in the House on May 8 (Alberta Hansard, May 8, 1985, p. 951) revealed some of Mr. King's reasoning for the Council which had not been published in the press:

> ...regulations under ... the Department of Education Act make it clear that the minister can revoke a teaching certificate for cause. The fact of the matter is that the minister has not had the means at hand of showing cause for the revocation of a teaching certificate.... We do not have the means of dealing with ... letters of complaint when they come to the minister....

Editorials in the daily papers (Calgary Herald, May 9, 1985, p. A4; Edmonton Journal, May 11, 1985, p. A6) during the first two weeks of the period charged the Minister with inflexibility and suggested he should consider a compromise such as the Ghitter proposal of a teacher-directed council. Weekly newspaper opinion pages generally favored the Minister (Wetaskiwin Times, May 8, 1985; Lacombe Globe, May 15, 1985).

On May 10 the Calgary Herald (p. D19) reported that teacher turnout at ATA meetings in Calgary about the Council had been disappointing. A Calgary ATA official, Don Quinn, was reported as saying that the ATA was "in trouble" if the 750 teachers at the meetings are the only Calgary teachers concerned about the Council. Calgary had 7,000 teachers.

> He said it may be that teachers feel the ATA "will look after them" and individual members don't need to be involved.
> "Teachers are apolitical by nature," Quinn said, adding teachers may not realize how badly the council will affect them.
> But he warned that a successful letter-writing campaign could convince King to scrap the council.
> "It will be the critical factor in changing the minister's mind, he said.

In Red Deer, ATA district representative Dorothy Stanley (Red Deer Advocate, May 11, 1985, p. 1C) claimed that " a rigid stance by Education Minister Dave King has deadlocked talks with the Alberta Teachers' Association on the proposed council on teaching standards." She also warned that the ATA would take action if the Council was forced on them. "We will recommend our members not participate" and "we will try to look at whatever legal recourse we have."

Typical of the letters-to-the-editor during the period was a teacher's letter published in the Calgary Herald, May 13.

> Recently, I received an "Open Letter to Alberta Teachers" from David King, minister of education, dated April 2.
>
> Although King stated several "facts" with no attempt to enlighten me as to their basis, I am most puzzled by the following (quote): "We want to acknowledge and support our professional teachers, who are the best guarantee of an excellent education."
>
> His form of acknowledgement is certainly unique. First, he blatantly flouts the entire democratic process with a unilateral ministerial order to create a "council" with vaguely defined powers, and then he threatens us with non-representation on his council if we refuse to endorse his undemocratic, dictatorial tactics.
>
> Not only is the quality of education under siege, but so are the most fundamental principles of democratic government.

In response to a question in the House (Alberta Hansard, May 8, 1985, p. 951) by NDP member, Jim Gurnett, Mr. King indicated that he might hold public hearings on a new Teaching Profession Act, but that he would not hold any on the Council (Calgary Herald, May 14, 1985, p. A5; Edmonton Journal, May 14, 1985, p. A8). The Fort McMurray Today (May 14, 1985, p. 3) quoted Conservative MLA Norm Weiss as telling teachers who phone him that they were mistaken about Mr. King's intentions for the Council. He said Mr. King is not trying to "snuff out their powers." He said he had received "a number" of phone calls and a petition signed by 125 teachers from within his riding.

Reduction of Newspaper Coverage

During the last five weeks of the period newspaper coverage of the Council was greatly reduced. The dominant theme of articles (Medicine Hat News, May 18, 1985, p.A3; Edmonton Journal, May 31, 1985, p. B1; Calgary Herald, May 31, 1985, p. B15; Red Deer Advocate, June 13, 1985, p. 1B) was that the Council was going ahead without the ATA.

Mrs. Thomas (Interview, April 14, 1987) said that "coverage fell off in May because both sides agreed that they were not going to say anything about it because Bosetti and Keeler were working on a compromise."

> That did not keep the Minister from making statements. he had one interview on radio that was broadcast across the province. I got calls from people the next day from all over.... We had had this agreement that we were not going to do anything in the press to make the other side look bad and I stuck to that very carefully. I called his office and he denied that he had done such a thing so we had our people get the tape. When I called him back, he denied it again. I said, "I have the tape and the transcript and its your voice. You make another statement like that and you won't know what hit you,..."
>
> Then I called his deputy and I said, "You had better explain the facts of life to him...." The deputy was a very strong person in that partnership and I guess he did make him see that I was quite willing to go ahead. I certainly didn't have anything to lose, but he did.

On May 22 in the House (Alberta Hansard, May 22, 1985, pp. 1112,1113) Mr. King indicated that he expected to make appointments to the Council in the early part of June and that organizational meetings would occur through the summer so that the Council could become operational September 1. He also noted that he had written a letter asking if the ATA would be in a "position" to nominate members to the Council by June 1.

In the letter to the ATA (David King, Letter to Nadene Thomas, May 21, 1985), Mr. King asserted that "the government intends to establish the Council ... as planned," but that "formation of the Council does not prevent ... proceeding with a discussion of a new Teaching Profession Act." He said he was not prepared to use discussions of a new Act as an "excuse for continuing to do nothing important" about practice reviews.

On May 30 (Alberta Hansard, May 30, 1985, p. 1242; Edmonton Journal, May 31, 1985, p. B1) Mr. King observed he had not yet received nominations from the ATA, but that he "might still wait for tomorrow's mail." He said he had received about 200 nominations for his five teacher appointees. On the other hand, he indicated that he had received about 13,000 names of the province's teachers on petitions protesting the Council and probably in excess of 500 letters.

According to Mrs. Thomas (Interview, April 14, 1987), Mr. King had said to the press that he had not received any petitions. She continued:

> One of the MLAs knew that these petitions were coming in and told us about them because he had seen them. The MLA wanted to have our copies tabled in the house but unfortunately you can't table copies so that didn't happen. Then I decided that one of the things I would do is take my stack of petitions which by that time was about two feet high on television. Without ever really being pointed out, it in itself made a statement that he could never after that successfully deny because the people had seen the stack. The fact that they fell over at one point didn't really hurt. They sort of floated around and slid across the floor. It was really marvelous.

Mrs. Thomas said the petitions showed Mr. King that the teachers supported the Association. However, Rich Vivone (Interview, March 24, 1987) discounted this view. He said the Minister continued to feel that teachers were split over COATS. "There were some teachers for it, some against it."

> We received these petitions in our office from Barnett House [ATA Headquarters]. You couldn't tell what school they were from.... So what good were they? ... Some people said to us that there was a form of peer pressure when the petitions were sent around the staff room. Who is not going to sign it?
>
> We have always felt in the Minister's office that a well thought out, handwritten or type written letter, even if there was only one and it made a reasonable point, carried much more weight than any petition.

On May 22 the Calgary Herald published a letter from Mrs. Thomas (also see Edmonton Journal, May 23, 1985):

> The recent activity surrounding the dispute between the teachers of Alberta and the minister of education on the question of practice review has created considerable confusion and perhaps more heat than light in its handling by the media.
>
> As president of the Alberta Teachers' Association, it has been one of my commitments to be open and accessible to the media of this province.

> Unfortunately, on this issue, this accessibility, although producing columns of reports in the papers and many minutes on television and radio, may have clouded the nub of the issue.
>
> From the association's point of view, there are a number of significant points which need to be made.

She then pointed out that the ATA has always favored practice review, including public participation, that the ATA's proposals for a new Teaching Profession Act have been consistent with the government's policy governing legislation on professions, and that most recently the ATA had proposed a structure which would separate its bargaining and professional functions. She continued:

> There are three objections to the current proposal by the minister of education: a) The proposal confuses advisory and judicial functions. b) The proposal would not provide the minister with the advice of representatives of the profession and other groups because it provides for him to hand-pick all the members. c) The proposal refuses to place the responsibility for practice review where it belongs -- with the profession.
>
> We have repeatedly stated that public disputes of the kind which is currently taking place can do nothing but undermine general confidence in education. There was no need for this dispute since the Alberta Teachers' Association favors the establishment of a practice review and it favors the building of a mature and responsible profession which can improve the service that it gives Alberta citizens.

These same objections became part of a "COATS Update" which the ATA sent out to teachers in early June (Alberta Teachers' Association, "COATS Update," June 4, 1985). In the newsletter the Association also reviewed the issues and provided a selection of comments made in the legislature by Mr. King.

By the end of May both parties had stopped talking to the press and the media had lost interest in the story. One of the few items of the period was a column by Roy Farran in the Calgary Herald (May 31, 1985, p. A8). He wrote:

> The sudden interest of government in educational content did not arise from the whim of some politician. It came from public pressure....
>
> Change has been necessarily slow. After all, teachers themselves are products of the system and faculties of education may dislike reform. All artists love their work.
>
> Hence the dispute. The teachers are understandably sensitive to implied criticism in the changes. That is why their union opposed examinations and dismisses suggestions that standards have fallen. And that is why Dave King and the government maintain that education is too important to be left to the educators alone.

Only one article appeared in the first 18 days of June, a report in the Red Deer Advocate (June 13, 1985, p. 1B) of Mr. King's speech to the spring convention of the Alberta School Trustees' Association. He indicated that he would appoint members of the Council by the end of the next week. He also said that the ATA could still claims its one seat, but that if it didn't he would fill it with his own appointment. In the same article, ATA representative Dorothy Stanley said the association was "unlikely to reverse its opposition to the council."

Period 3. Compromise

There was a period of reconciliation from the announcement of a compromise on June 19 until the council began work in August. Twenty-three items (13.5 percent) were published, only four of which were in July.

Nine items from June 19 to June 21 dealt with the compromise between the Minister and the ATA. In exchange for the right to appoint their own member and for a promise that the Council would only be a temporary "advisory" body until its function was incorporated into a "unitary" ATA under a new Act, the Association's executive agreed that they would participate on the Council (Calgary Herald, June 19, 1985, p.A3, Calgary Sun, June 19, 1985, p. 3; Edmonton Journal, June 19, 1985, p. B6; Edmonton Sun, June 19, 1985, p.3; Grande Prairie Herald-Tribune, June 19, 1985, p. 1; Ft. McMurray Today, June 20, 1985, p. 3; Medicine Hat News, June 19, 1985, p.A2). Editorials in the Calgary Herald (June 21, 1985, p.A4) and the Edmonton Journal (June 21, 1985, p. A6) lauded the compromise.

Negotiations

Agreement came about through the negotiations of Dr. Reno Bosetti and Dr. Bernie Keeler. Dr. Keeler (Interview, March 30, 1987) recalled Dr. Bosetti's phone call: "Reno phoned and said, 'Is there anyway that we can work our way out of this mess we are in?' I responded, 'I'm sure there is a way. Let's talk about it.'"

Dr. Bosetti (Interview, March 27, 1987) indicated that the agreement "became more and more necessary as both parties saw themselves disagreeing and disagreeing and never reaching a solution." He added:

> The ATA and the Minister both said, "Let's get together. Both recognized the futility of fighting publicly. Our concerns basically were that the whole of education was getting a bad image because of this debate, unnecessarily so and unfairly so. So when both parties recognized that I think that's when it was agreed that we should find a solution.

Thus, a series of meetings were initiated and finally on June 13, the day following Mr. King's speech to the Trustees' Association in Red Deer, Dr. Bosetti and Dr. Keeler met to draw up a compromise whereby the Alberta Teachers' Association would "withdraw its opposition in principle to the establishment of the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards." Typed by Dr. Keeler and signed by both Dr. Keeler and Dr. Bosetti, the agreement included the following:

> 1. a) The terms of reference will include: to develop recommendations and procedures for dealing with the unskilled practice of teaching and to implement the practice review procedures on their approval by the Minister.
> 2. Discussions will be initiated in the near future, at the officials' level, to work toward a new Teaching Profession Act. This effort will proceed by means of the development of a set of principles for a new Act; these principles will include a unitary organization and incorporation of the work to be undertaken by COATS. There will be provision for public input on the principles prior to the drafting of legislation.
> 3. The Alberta Teachers' Association will name one member to COATS.
> 4. Notwithstanding withdrawal of its opposition in principle to the establishment of COATS, the Association will continue to be free to object to the composition, mandate and recommendations of COATS.
> 5. The Minister and the Association president will each adopt a moderate and conciliatory stance in communicating with the media on this agreement.

Announcement of Compromise

Alberta Education and the ATA issued press releases on June 18. Both press releases were the same except that in the lead the ATA release added, "The announcement ended more than two months of sometimes bitter wrangling between the ATA and the Minister."

An article in the Edmonton Journal (June 19, 1985, p. B6) described the compromise as follows:

> The Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) has dealt itself into the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards, ending a three-month battle with Education Minister Dave King.
>
> King fired the first shot March 29 when he proposed the council. He said he would appoint all 11 members to the teacher competence and review body.
>
> He would accept nominations from the association but he made no guarantees its candidates would be selected.
>
> The association's response that it would ignore the council was changed Tuesday when King backed off, saying the association could appoint its own representative.
>
> King said the compromise would eventually lead to development of a new teaching profession act that would see the association take over reviews of teacher competence.
>
> "They are prepared to give the council the benefit of the doubt to put their best effort to making the council work, not so much they believe in the council but because they believe in the importance of professional development and practice review," he said.
>
> Association president Nadene Thomas said the power to appoint its member and King's willingness to talk about eventually incorporating the council's function into a "unitary" ATA persuaded her group to agree.
>
> King had been talking about separating the union from its professional development functions, an idea he seems to have dropped.

Mr. King (Calgary Herald, June 19, 1985, p. A3) said the compromise occurred because "'through better communication' the Department of Education was able to convince the ATA it was not out to bust the union but was sincerely interested in improving the profession."

"Quite truthfully, there have been sort of undercover negotiations for about a month," said Mrs. Thomas (Calgary Herald, June 19, 1985, p. A3). "I think it's a compromise. He did get his way on some things. It was something that was obviously going to go ahead."

Later, Mrs. Thomas (Interview, April 14, 1987) said the most important aspect of the agreement from the ATA viewpoint was the assurance that the profession would remain under a unitary form of governance. "It was not an item that the press ever really emphasized, yet to us it was the most important." She continued:

> We accomplished getting our own appointed representation on that Council, and it has proven in the intervening months to be very wise, as there are a lot of people there who have little background. We had the compromise on having our own appointed person and we also insisted that whatever came out of this was worked into a new Teaching Profession Act or an amended Teaching Profession Act so that it would eventually become the responsibility of the profession, fully professional, and I suppose most important of all was a statement signed by the deputy on behalf of the Minister with a followup letter from the Minister saying that he agreed to this that the Association would remain one. For us I think that is more important than anything else.

In the Grande Prairie Herald-Tribune (June 19, 1985, p. 1), local president Mark Gomes gave much of the credit for the compromise to lobbying the MLAs. "...the many petitions to MLAs on the issue from teachers showed something as significant as the council shouldn't get through without agreement."

Announcement of Membership

In a news conference June 21 Mr. King announced the membership of the Council. He signed the Ministerial Order establishing the Council the same day. Nine of 10 items from June 22 to June 29 considered the appointments. The only one sour note came from the Medicine Hat News (June 26, 1985, p. A2), which ran a story quoting the local ATA representative about the lack of a Council member from southeast Alberta. "Albertans are Albertans-- but we've always been the forgotten corner," said the ATA representative.

In the same issue of the News (June 26, 1985, p. A4), an editorial took shots at both the Minister and the ATA. "Mr. King is at fault for his unilateral imposition of the council, the ATA for its intransigence."

Items in July dealt with the resolution of the confrontation (Alberta Report, July 1, 1985, p. 30; Lacombe Globe, July 10, 1985), with a Council member's viewpoint about the Council (Lethbridge Herald, July 3, 1985, p. A3) and with preparation for Council operation (Edmonton Journal, July 10, 1985, p. B2).

During the next year only three further items about the Council were found: one four-inch article in the Calgary Sun on August 21, 1985 (page 6) about the creation of a complaints process for parents, and two in February 1986 (Calgary Herald, February 14,

1986, p. A9; Edmonton Journal, February 17, 1986,p. D3) about funds for the Council. The print media have not run articles describing administration of the Council nor evaluating its effectiveness.

Summary

This chapter has examined print media coverage of the formation of the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards from its announcement on March 29, 1985 until it began work in August. In addition, the chapter has described other details about the Council's formation, not revealed through the news media, but available through government documents and interviews. This approach has demonstrated how well the media coverage described the events related to the establishment of the Council.

Although the first indication of the Council came March 14 in the Speech from the Throne, the formal announcement was made in the Legislature March 29 by the Minister of Education. At the same time the Department of Education issued a press release. First coverage of the Council came from these sources as well as a press release and reactions from ATA President Nadene Thomas. Reactions from Opposition Leader Ray Martin were picked up from his comments in the legislature at the time of the announcement.

Proposition 36. Official government announcements are primary sources of news about government policy.

Proposition 37. Newspapers balance official government announcements with reactions from interest groups and opposition legislators.

Followup articles were written from the Minister's responses to opposition questions during Question Period. For example, Mr. King's comments about teachers and professionalism were taken from Question Period. In addition, it was from Question Period that the news media discovered that Mr. King had not been allowed to speak at a meeting of ATA local presidents held on April 1. Similar to Proposition 11, this confirms much of what has been written about Question Period.

Proposition 38. Question Period is a main source of quotations from government leaders and of reaction by opposition legislators.

Because the Legislature was a natural forum from which the Minister could express his views about COATS, he seems to have been approached less for reactions than was the ATA. The ATA also had the advantage of having local representatives throughout the province to whom the press could go for reactions in order to provide balance to the Minister's comments or press releases. The reactions were most often more sensational than the Minister's original comments and would often get better positioning in headlines, story leads or locations. Reactions made the story more controversial and augmented the conflict.

Proposition 39. Interest group members and opposition legislators have an advantage in getting press because they know what an announcement has said.

Proposition 40. Government officials are more tempered in their comments than are interest group members.

Proposition 41. Sources put in the position of providing reaction make comments which are more sensational or controversial than the comments to which they are reacting.

Proposition 42. Reactions to comments have an additive effect in making a story more controversial and in augmenting a conflict.

The ATA Annual Representative Assembly and subsequent local information meetings provided events for press coverage and a means of putting forth the ATA viewpoint. In order to counteract this publicity and what he perceived as a large city media bias, the Minister travelled throughout the province, visiting editorial boards and going on radio talk shows.

Proposition 43. Events are an important source of news and can be an effective means of getting publicity for the sponsoring group's viewpoint.

Following a little over a month of intensive news coverage, the number of stories written about COATS slowed to a trickle. After both parties agreed that they would no longer debate the issue through the press, the media seemed to lose interest in the story and there was very little coverage. The Minister played a lead in a number of stories during the last weeks of May and once in early June, mainly as a result of press coverage of Question Period or other events. The ATA did not react and with no conflict, press coverage was scanty.

Proposition 44. The press will lose interest in a story unless the parties in an issue are willing to debate publicly.

There was considerable coverage of the announcement of the compromise between the ATA and the Minister and of the announcement of the Council members. This coverage came after more than a month of quiet about the Council and was of short duration. There has been very little followup after these announcements.

Proposition 45. Announcements of government policy make news, but without conflict or controversy coverage is limited to the announcement only and there is very little followup.

Although coverage of the formation of COATS was extensive, a number of stories were either missed in the media or were only briefly covered. Moreover, few of the first stories connected the announcement and the ATA reaction with the continuing story about past negotiations for a new Teaching Profession Act. Only a few reporters suggested the Minister's political ambitions were tied to the timing of the announcement of the Council. Few stories ran about the ATA information meetings and almost missing from press reports was coverage of the teachers' lobbying efforts. A furore was created when teacher plans for action were revealed, but there was little followup. In addition, the media was silent about efforts to negotiate a settlement. Announcements of a compromise on June 19, 1985 almost seemed to come as a surprise. On the other hand, the story about Ron Ghitter's suggestion for a teacher controlled council got more coverage than it may have deserved.

Proposition 46. Press coverage is frequently fragmented, showing a lack of awareness of connections to previous stories and indicating an absence of followup and a failure to investigate leads.

Further discussion of the depth of coverage will be presented in Chapter 7 along with consideration of the effect of the media in bringing about a resolution of the COATS controversy. In addition, Chapter 7 will deal with the role of the news media in covering policy making and with the relationship between news coverage and other forces in the policy making process.

Chapter 7

ROLE OF THE PRINT MEDIA IN POLICY MAKING

This chapter responds to the central question of this study which is the role of the print media in policy making. To answer this question, each of the four sub-problems of the study are addressed in light of print media coverage of the formation of the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards. The following questions are considered:

1. What criteria did reporters and editors use to determine whether comments, events or issues related to COATS were newsworthy?
2. How well was COATS covered in terms of accuracy, balance and depth?
3. What impact did the print media have on the policy decision?
4. What functions did the print media serve in the policy making context?

In examining these questions, participant comments, documents and newspaper content are considered in relation to the relevant professional literature. In addition, propositions from Chapters 4, 5 and 6 are further refined in developing propositions in this chapter. These lead to conclusions about the central question which are reported in Chapter 8.

How COATS fit the Criteria for Newsworthiness

To be newsworthy, Gans (1980, pp. 147-181) indicated that a story must meet some of the following criteria. A story must involve important people, affect many lives, and be interesting. It must have past or future implications. It must be new, unique, and have qualities of drama and action. It must also have appeal to a wide audience. Then, if the timing and space requirements are right, and if the competition has not already "scooped" the idea, the story may make the news.

Grande Prairie Herald-Tribune reporter David Olinger (Interview, April 15, 1987) said that a good story "affects a lot of people and is somewhat controversial. "It is sort of like the old story: Which is news? Dog bites man or man bites dog."

Wayne Kondro (Interview, April 1, 1987), who was the Legislature reporter for the Calgary Herald during the COATS debate, said education makes good copy:

> The public is interested in a story if they have expertise in it. Every parent is an expert in education so it is a topic of great public interest. If there is a controversy, if it hits home, if it's a pocket book issue, if they have some involvement in the issue, that makes the story better.

Did the people involved in COATS meet the criterion of importance? Did the issue have impact on people's lives? Was the issue new or unique? Did it relate to past or future events? Did it have the qualities of drama and action? Were balance, format and competition influential in determining the newsworthiness of this issue?

The Importance of the People in COATS

The two main personalities involved in the public debate over the Council were Minister of Education David King and ATA president Nadene Thomas.

As part of Lougheed's inner cabinet, and as a potential candidate for Premier of the province, David King met the criterion of importance. As an innovator and risk-taker, he had received front page coverage on numerous other occasions.

At the time that Mr. King gave up the education portfolio in February 1986, columnist Glenn Martin (Edmonton Sun, February 18, 1986, p. 11) praised him as follows:

> We ought not to let him get away from education... without noting his remarkable tenure of almost seven years in the education post. He did much to shape a new era in Alberta schooling, and I think he deserves high marks for the initiative, imagination and stamina he displayed.
>
> He took on a haughty, argumentative profession and more than held his own in numerous encounters with it. He won the day in such matters as provincial exams, a stick-in-the-mud teacher-certification board, education for the gifted, improved guidelines for secondary education, two overhauls of the social studies program, and teacher evaluation.
>
> What's more, he did all this and more as a university drop-out, until he got his own B.A. two years ago. Even if his outsider status was an asset in keeping him clear of professional cliches and seductions, it wasn't mere brashness that turned King into an educational maker and shaker.
>
> He demonstrated vision and energy....

On the other hand, his principal adversary, Nadene Thomas, accused him of political ambition; he wanted to be Premier (Interview, April 14, 1987):

> If anybody in this world had an opportunity to do good for education and for children it was Dave King, because he was a minister who obviously had the acceptance of his Premier, he was a minister who had lots of money to do things. He had such an opportunity to do wonderful things. I guess the tragedy is that all that money and time and opportunity were wasted, because of his own political ambitions.

Pat Sarjeant described Mrs. Thomas and the role she played in fighting Mr. King's plans for COATS in a feature article in the Calgary Herald, August 4, 1985,

> Having been catapulted into the limelight earlier this year during the Association's bitter feud with Education Minister Dave King over the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards, Thomas soon earned a reputation as a tough-talking, no-nonsense person.
>
> When plans for the formation of the Council were announced in March, she immediately labelled it "insulting and undemocratic," saying it undermined the ATA's responsibility over professional competence.
>
> She continued to attack the Council until King agreed to allow the ATA to choose one member of the Council, and also to begin negotiations on a new Teaching Profession Act that would lead eventually to the dissolution of the Council into the Teachers' Association.

But, the best description of Mrs. Thomas is probably in her own words (Interview, April 14, 1987):

> I was grandmotherly looking, an old school teacher, teaching last in elementary school. [Dave King] was never exactly able to cope with that kind of image that I had.... I am not a patsy and when [Dave King] pushed I would push back.

If the story had only been about Mrs. Thomas, the press would probably have not given it the play they did. The president of the Teachers' Association is just not as important as a high ranking provincial cabinet minister. But together, they made a real David and Goliath type story. The press loved the struggle and the struggle made the story interesting.

The Impact of COATS

As was suggested, education is an important news beat, because it has "big bucks" and affects "a lot of people." Still, how important was the story about COATS in relation to other educational issues?

Edmonton Journal editor Linda Hughes (Interview, April 21, 1987) said, "I don't know that this story would mean much to parents. It didn't say what it would mean to them. It probably couldn't have. But in terms of real interest, it focused on certain groups."

COATS was too complex of an issue for the public to understand, said Dr. Bernie Keeler, executive secretary of the ATA (Interview, March 30, 1987).

> It is not a strike, where you can explain what this strike is about nor an issue like class size. The public can understand that because they have all been in classes. Many of them are parents of kids who are now in classes and they know what it means. But who controls certification and who represents issues of that nature-- which COATS is all about-- is so irrelevant to the average citizen's day-to-day experience.

The people the story affected most, Dr. Keeler said, were teachers. And, "the only concern we had with media coverage was the degree to which it would misinform our members. The general public was not a target of our efforts at all. It was going to be all we could do to reach our own members, explaining the issue to them, and assuming they understood to get them to react with the legislators."

Another group upon which the media had impact were MLAs, according to Dr. Reno Bosetti, deputy minister of education (Interview, March 27, 1987).

> I think the media coverage and the ATA reaction had an effect upon government generally. And there was concern about public opinion. There was also concern by the MLAs about a war going on (and MLAs don't like wars--justifiably so). The media certainly served to bring to the attention of government members, not so much the nature of the debate, but more that there was a debate.

Thus the impact of the story was only directly related to the public in that it affected schooling. It had greater impact upon teachers and upon legislators.

COATS as a New or Unique Issue

COATS was "new," but not particularly "unique." It came as the resolution of a problem which had been an issue for many years. It was a solution that had been suggested in varying formats numerous times.

Legislature library clippings, beginning in 1973, indicated a growing interest in teacher competency, partly because there was no adequate mechanism to deal with it. Over a period of about 20 years efforts had been made to revise the Teaching Profession Act to provide remedies for handling incompetent teachers.

With the appointment of David King as minister of education, efforts were renewed to deal with the problem. In 1981, he tried to introduce a new Act into the Legislature, but teacher opposition was so great that he relented, giving teachers the right to veto any future legislative plans on their behalf (Edmonton Journal, March 9, 10, 1981; Calgary Herald, March 9, 12, 1981).

The firing of Jim Keegstra in 1982, and the extensive media coverage given to his appeal before the Board of Reference in 1983, provided Mr. King a "window of opportunity" to introduce teacher evaluations in the province. He also reopened negotiations for a new Teaching Profession Act. In 1984 agreement had been reached with the ATA, but the Alberta School Trustees' Association vetoed their efforts. A warning by politician Ron Ghitter to teachers and trustees during the fall of 1984 (Calgary Herald, October 18, 1984) was prophetic. "Solve your political differences over the issue of self-governance for the Alberta Teachers' Association. Otherwise, the government will do it for you."

On March 29, 1985, Mr. King offered COATS as the solution to dealing with teacher performance and as an alternative to teacher self-governance. The Council was organized along similar lines as a proposed Board of Teacher Standards in the 1984 revisions to the Teaching Profession Act, except that he held jurisdiction over the Council instead of the ATA.

The announcement of COATS was news, but the suggestion of the Council was not unique. In one form or another, it had been the subject of news coverage for almost 20 years.

Qualities of Drama and Action

Dunn (1969) cited "conflict, controversy, or attack" as the first criterion for newsworthiness. It was the confrontation between parties that was probably the major reason for the extensive coverage of the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards.

David King did not have a good relationship with the ATA even before his establishment of the Council; the announcement and the subsequent attacks and counter-attacks made a bad relationship worse (Nadene Thomas, Interview, April 14, 1987). The announcement served as a signal to bring the ATA out of its corner and into the fray. The news media stood as sideline observers, yelling the blow-by-blow action to the crowd behind them and encouraging the fighters.

According to Dr. Bosetti (Interview, March 27, 1987), "the controversy was not created by the media. It was kept alive by them...." The news media, he said, focuses on the controversy and has no interest in resolving issues.

> It seems to be more bent on the sensational side, the conflictual side and less so upon agreement. If you have agreement,... the matter isn't newsworthy and the media tends to back off.

Dr. Keeler (Interview, March 30, 1987) said few journalists tried to understand the issues involved in COATS. Rather they covered it as a "two party confrontation ... because that is nice and easy to understand and write about."

The headlines probably tell the story of confrontation best. "King blasted for lateral end-run at ATA" (Edmonton Journal, March 30, 1985). "King's teaching council accused of union busting" (Edmonton Journal, April 2, 1985). "Teachers refuse to hear me, says King" (Edmonton Sun, April 3, 1985). "'We can discipline our own,' say angry teachers" (Ft. McMurray Today, April 3, 1985). "ATA can like it or lump it" (Grande Prairie Herald-

Tribune, April 4, 1985). "Teachers declare war on education minister" (Calgary Herald, April 6, 1985).

Thus the struggle between little David and the giant Goliath continued. Finally, before one or the other was seriously hurt, they saw the need for compromise.

Balance, Format and Competition

Balance, format considerations and competition did not have an important role in establishing the newsworthiness of COATS. However, they did play a part in the coverage.

Balance makes a story newsworthy by making it appeal to a wider audience. The coverage of COATS did not have impact on a large audience, but it did have wide audience appeal because of the controversy. Although balance generally was achieved, it did not seem to be a factor in creating wide audience appeal.

While COATS was a "hot" issue during the first month of the controversy, newspaper articles were generally placed in the front sections of the papers. When reporters became "bored" of the story and numbers of news item fell, article length decreased and stories were relegated more to the back pages of the papers. Editorials became a smaller portion of the overall coverage.

Competition for the news was fairly intense during the first month of coverage. Smaller dailies as well as the larger papers ran regular stories about COATS. As coverage fell off, the issue became more of a big city story with less coverage in the smaller provincial dailies.

Summary

Although the review of literature did not set out any hierarchy of importance for criteria of newsworthiness, this study indicated that some may be more important than others. The most important criteria for choosing COATS as newsworthy was the drama and action involved in the confrontation between the Minister of Education and the Alberta

Teachers' Association. It became more interesting because of the personalities. Nadene Thomas, as shown by her comments, is a fighter with a sense of humor. Her opponent, David King, was a high ranking cabinet minister in the provincial government and an aspirant for the premiership. He wanted to be seen as providing strong leadership and was not above a scuffle with the president of the ATA.

Of lesser importance in deciding whether the issues surrounding COATS were newsworthy were the criteria related to impact and uniqueness. The story had only direct impact on the public through the teachers. Also concerned were the MLAs who worried about public opinion.

Although the announcement of the Council provided a new angle, the issues were not unique but rather they were the basis of a running story which had been covered over a number of years. This suggests another criterion for deciding what's news: the amount of previous coverage of the issue.

In reflecting back on press coverage of COATS, Edmonton Journal editor Linda Hughes said:

> I don't think it was news per se because it was controversial. It was news because the ATA which is a very large organization went very public with a fight and held press conferences, emergency meetings, had MLAs asking questions in the House.... It became a very public fight, so I think that's why there was so much publicity, not because it was controversial per se.

Proposition 47. The presence or potential for conflict is the most important criteria for covering a policy issue; other important criteria include the public stature of the participants, the impact of the policy, and the past coverage of the issue.

How well newspapers covered COATS

Quality of news coverage is measurable in terms of accuracy. Among the factors determining accuracy are comprehensiveness and balance of coverage (Ryan and Owen, 1977, pp. 27-32). Comprehensiveness is defined by its breadth (extent) and depth (detail). Extent of coverage is studied in terms of number of stories or column inches (Winter et al.,

1982). Detail is studied in terms of the aspects of stories and issues covered (Larson, 1985; Sullivan, 1985). Fair coverage of all sides of a story without sensationalism provides balance. The reporter's objectivity assures balance and fairness of coverage.

Breadth of Coverage

Breath of coverage is measured in terms of amount. Throughout the province at least 171 newspaper items dealt with the topic of the Council. This amount of coverage is significant when compared to the number of articles published about the subject of teacher review and a new Teaching Profession Act in previous years. Chapters 4 and 5 gave more details in support of this claim.

Obviously, the issue received extensive newspaper coverage, particularly in the large cities of Calgary and Edmonton where it received greater coverage than in the smaller cities and rural areas. (For example, the Calgary Herald gave as much coverage as all small dailies combined.) The extent of the coverage was affirmed by interviews with the five senior officials of the Department of Education who in suggesting a case to study recommended COATS.

Depth of Coverage

Depth is more difficult to determine and to show than breadth. Depth is illustrated by the topics covered and those missed as suggested by the content analysis and in the interviews with participants. Although coverage of the formation of COATS was extensive, a number of stories were either missed in the media or were only briefly covered. Rather than explaining the issue, most of the coverage was about the controversy between the Minister and the ATA.

Although previous coverage of teacher competence issues may have been important in press coverage of COATS, few of the first stories connected the announcement and the ATA reaction with the continuing story about past negotiations for a new Teaching Profession Act. Calgary Herald reporter Sheila Pratt (April 6, 1985, p. A3) was surprised

at how quickly both sides were at "each other's throats without any reasonable dialogue." Even as a veteran education reporter, she missed, as did many of her colleagues, the fact that COATS was a result of the failure of previous negotiations. The Minister pointed this out as he responded to questions in the House (Alberta Hansard, April 1, 1985, pp. 293, 294; April 17, p. 438), but even then few reporters made an effort to explain the long history of attempts to get a new Teaching Profession Act, including the ATA's unwillingness to continue negotiations (Nadene Thomas letter to David King, February 11, 1985) or the recent events leading up to it as such as ATA suggestions for an Advisory Committee on Teacher Education (ACOTE).

Don Wanagas, columnist with the Edmonton Sun, was one of only a few journalists who suggested the Minister's political ambitions were tied to the timing of the announcement of the Council. He picked up on Nadene Thomas's suggestion that Mr. King might be using the teachers to get political points. Wanagas wrote only one story about COATS (Edmonton Sun, March 31, 1985). This story is significant only because the ATA executive believed then and still believe that Mr. King's actions were politically motivated (ATA Press Release, March 29, 1985; Nadene Thomas, Interview, April 14, 1987). The ATA made this aspect of the story available to newspapers. That little use was made of it offers support for Gans' (1980, p. 189) contention that editors often "edit out" or "soften" comments that they think are unfair.

Newspapers ran very few stories about the ATA information meetings (Grande Prairie Herald-Tribune, April 17, 1985, p. 1; Fort McMurray Today, April 17, 1985, p. 1). Only one appeared in the large cities, describing poor attendance (Calgary Herald, May 10, 1985, p. D19). Otherwise the information meetings in the province were virtually uncovered by the print media.

Almost missing from press reports was coverage of the teachers' lobbying efforts. Considerable coverage was given to teacher plans for action (Calgary Sun, April 26, 1985; Edmonton Sun, April 26, 1985; Medicine Hat News, April 26, 1985), but there was little

followup. In addition, the media was silent about efforts to negotiate a settlement. Even though Mrs. Thomas (Interview, April 14, 1987) indicated that "both sides agreed they were not going to say anything," still the newspapers should have done more to update the story. It was the major education item for over a month and was still unresolved. There was no suggestion in the press that a settlement was near.

By contrast, the story about Ron Ghitter's suggestion for a teacher controlled Council got more coverage than it may have deserved. No paper mentioned that the ATA had previously rejected the Ghitter recommendation even though the Minister pointed this out (Alberta Hansard, April 1, 1985, p. 294) nor did they suggest that his actions might have also been politically motivated. Mr. King's executive assistant, Rich Vivone (Interview, March 24, 1987), compared coverage of Mr. Ghitter's leadership aspirations with that of the Minister's:

> It amazed me that Mr. Ghitter went to the Trustees' Association, bashing teachers, and nobody talked about him running for the leadership. Paul Cashman, the Journal reporter-- I asked him what he thought of Mr. Ghitter's speech. He said, "He sounds to me like a premier." That never came out in his stories. But when King disagreed publicly with the ATA, he was accused of having ulterior political motives -- the party leadership.

Following the compromise and announcement of the members of COATS, coverage virtually stopped. In the next year there were only three items, two about funding for the Council.

Interviews with participants substantiated these observations about the lack of depth of news coverage. They said the news media did not try to explain the issue. Rather they emphasized the controversy between the parties.

Mr. King (Interview, March 24, 1987) said he did not think reporters did a good job of covering the debate about the Council.

> In the reporting, in the columns on COATS I don't believe they demonstrated a knowledge of the issues; I don't believe they demonstrated that there was common cause and common good on which we could come together. It [the reporting} wasn't very knowledgeable.

The reason he said was that reporters had not been "around over the preceding two years." He indicated that 20 years ago reporters would come into his office two or three times a week looking for stories.

> In the seven years [as Minister of Education] I don't think there were more than four reporters who ever came in to my office just on a fishing expedition. They came in if they had something that compelled them to be there.

Mrs. Thomas (Interview, April 14, 1987) said she didn't think the press ever fully understood the issues.

> I began to think they had come to an understanding of the personal agenda of Mr. King. I don't think they ever really saw the issue from the point of view of the profession. But they certainly did a job of reporting every incident, every piece of the confrontation ... to the point that at some times my own members would think that I was being far to unkind to a Minister of the Crown, especially since he was a man. That always sort of confused me.

Mrs. Thomas said the newspapers "often got caught up in trying to draw parallels" between the professions. "There are not parallels between doctors and lawyers let alone between doctors and lawyers and teachers," she said.

In reflecting back on how the media covered COATS, Dr. Bosetti (Interview, March 27, 1987) indicated the reporters were selective in their coverage.

> I think Mr. King should have played down "I'm going ahead regardless" and played up the openness and willingness to communicate which was always there. He tried, but the media tended to pickup the notion that we were going to go ahead anyway and didn't pickup the notion that we were always open to communication and discussion. I guess they focused on the end product (instead of the process) and the media forgot everything else he said and that became the heading.

As Dr. Bernie Keeler (Interview, March 30, 1987) noted, the ATA executive was concerned about the degree to which media coverage might misinform its members. He said the ATA relied upon its own internal communications because the media did not understand the issue and couldn't be depended upon to explain it.

> The media was interested because King is good copy and the media did understand that he was using some rather breathtaking tactics. They were interested in the process that was going on between us and King, not for its substance, but for its form, style.The media like to view all issues as two party confrontations if they can do so, because that is nice and easy to understand and write about.
>
> The media seems to be given to the point that either one party is right or the other party is right. They ignore both the possibilities that both parties are wrong or that both parties are right. In life both parties are partly wrong and both parties are partly right.

Dr. Keeler claimed further that the media did not take any initiative to go beyond the confrontation between the Minister and the ATA. Nor did they consider COATS as important as they had other issues.

> The editorial boards of these large papers meet with people like Dave King and Reno Bosetti and me -- if I ask -- to listen to what this kind of person thinks are issues and what substantive issues are. They don't necessarily agree with what they hear, but they do decide from that what kind of coverage and how much coverage they are going to give. COATS was not one issue where it was done. They must have decided this was one issue they really didn't want to bother with.

Participants in the policy decision agreed that newspapers did not do well in covering the major issues about the Council. Rather they covered the controversy between the parties. "The controversy was not created by the media," said Dr. Bosetti (Interview, March 27, 1987). "It was kept alive by them, but not created by them." When both sides agreed to tone down their comments, coverage virtually stopped. Newspaper handling of this controversy is discussed further under the topic of balance.

Balance of Coverage

As pointed out in Chapter 5, balance was achieved overall, although only about 30 percent of the individual news items were neutral. In spite of the overall balance, it is still useful to note the differences and to speculate about the reasons for them.

Balance is one way reporters try to achieve objectivity. "Within every news story," said Edmonton Journal editor Linda Hughes, "we try to have balance." However, she said "sometimes the other side won't comment and then you are left with only one side of the story."

> That doesn't necessarily achieve balance overall because we ourselves don't set an agenda and we don't say the ATA has initiated five stories let's have five ... by the government. That's not the way we operate.
>
> I think balance is achieved within each story, but within the long run maybe it's not.

David Olinger (Interview, April 15, 1987) said he tries "to get both sides of the story as much as possible" and if he can't "get both sides in one story," then he is "sure to get a followup as soon as possible." He indicated that fairness is important; otherwise "people are not going to talk to you again. You are going to lose your credibility." In addition, he said "readers deserve to know both sides of the story."

Availability of sources seems to be a major factor in shaping the viewpoint of items. The small city dailies overall favored the ATA. This might be attributable to the nature of the papers and their coverage, but more likely it is a result of the advantage of having local representatives throughout the province.They served as sources for the ATA whereas generally the Minister was the only government spokesperson. In addition, although local ATA information meetings seemed to get little coverage, some of the favorable coverage might have been because of them.

David Olinger (Interview, April 15, 1987), who wrote many of the Herald-Tribune stories, indicated that having officials locally may have given the ATA an advantage.

> Obviously when you are in a meeting with ATA officials, there is plenty of copy there and you only have space for maybe a couple of points from the Minister's point of view--very little in comparison to what the ATA is getting. In a case like that all you can do is the next time maybe balance it out or maybe write a whole story from the Minister's point of view....
>
> If one side of the story is not available, you still have to run the story because it is a good story. The next day you are sure to get the other side of the story. In any story I try overall to have a fair approach.

The large city papers gave less support to the ATA position than did the small city dailies. Part of this difference is because overall the Edmonton Sun gave favorable coverage to the Minister.

The Edmonton Sun was the only paper that quoted the Minister more frequently than they did the ATA. This might be because the Minister was more available to Edmonton Sun reporters or it could be that they made a greater effort to contact him. In addition, the

Edmonton Sun was the only paper that gave immediate coverage to the Minister's comments in the House about his attendance at an ATA meeting where they refused to let him speak. Other papers did not pick up this story until he refused to attend the ATA Annual Representative Assembly.

Mr. King indicated that he preferred the coverage of the Sun over that of the Journal (Conversation, December 1985). However, Rich Vivone, executive assistant to David King (Interview, March 24, 1987), when asked if he thought the Minister had a special relationship with the Edmonton Sun, said he did not think so. The attitude of the Sun papers is different than that of the Edmonton Journal and the Calgary Herald, he said. He said the Edmonton Sun would invite the Minister to come and visit their editorial board, but the Journal would never do that. The Minister had to ask to be invited. At the Sun papers, "the meetings were more lively. There was more give and take, more fun. It was just an easier meeting."

The other large city dailies quoted almost equally from both the Minister and the ATA. Coverage in the Calgary Sun and Edmonton Journal was close to balanced or neutral. The Calgary Herald favored the ATA. The Calgary Herald's preferential treatment to the ATA may have been partly because they gave more coverage to Ron Ghitter's support for the ATA. Ghitter was a former MLA from Calgary. In addition, the Herald, which ran 17 opinion pieces of 40 items, seemed to support the ATA position editorially. While most opinion pieces in other papers favored the Minister, only three of 17 items in the Herald favored the Minister while 10 favored the ATA viewpoint. (The Edmonton Journal ran only six opinion items, three favored the ATA and one the Minister.)

Weeklies showed a stronger ATA influence in news stories than in editorials, likely because of the availability of local ATA sources. On the other hand, as many editorials ran favoring the ATA's viewpoint as the Minister's viewpoint, although several editorials were considered strongly supportive of the Minister. One might have thought that Alberta's rural

publishers would have taken a stronger position against the "teachers' union" in support of the Conservative government.

Three of four news items in other publications were news features. These were neutral in viewpoint. News features are written with a longer deadline, after the event instead of as it is happening, and often from background information. Characteristically they seek and usually offer a balanced view.

It is not surprising that when items contained only one source they favored that source -- either the Minister or the ATA. Sixty-three of the 171 items analyzed in this study were of this sort. However, when the Minister and the ATA were both sources, the items generally favored the ATA. This bias may reflect the fact that controversial comments get headlines. Examination of the content of the items suggested that the majority of sensational comments were made by the ATA. An editorial in the Edmonton Sun (April 14, 1985, p. 10) claimed that "it's the ATA which has taken this debate down to the level of name-calling and attempts at personal humiliation. It can hardly complain when King declines to join them in the basement."

Dr. Bosetti (Interview, March 27, 1987) felt the media coverage was imbalanced, focusing on the ATA side because "that is where the controversy was; that is where the action was in general." He attributed the imbalance of coverage to the media's tendency to cover the sensational.

Mr. King (Interview, March 24, 1987) agreed that the media's attitude about controversy and sensationalism was reflected in news coverage of the Council on Alberta Teacher Standards.

> I think that reporters and columnists covered the development of the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards in such a way as to promote excitement, the sense that there was confrontation between the Minister and the ATA, the sense that it was going to shape up as a major test of will and of strength, that it was going to shape up as a blood battle. And further as soon as their early stories had expressed those kinds of predictions they became self interested in seeing that the predictions came true.

Although Mrs. Thomas (Interview, April 14, 1987) agreed that the news media were interested in covering controversy, she disagreed about their motives and fairness.

> The press was very fair.... They enjoyed watching this sort of pushing match, just like a couple of bullies on the playground, I guess. And so it wasn't necessary for them to manufacture anything. Everything that was happening was so interesting and so full of purple prose that my impression at least is that they reported quite fairly on it.

From the viewpoint of Calgary Herald legislative reporter Wayne Kondro (Interview, April 1, 1987) the conflict between the Minister and the ATA helped to make balance easy to achieve in covering COATS.

> Since this was a breaking news story, I was reporting precisely the latest development. If either side did or said something, of course I went to the other side to get their viewpoint. Because the sides were so clearly divided it was easy to have balance. They treated the issue without any grey areas.
>
> The two camps were so polarized that if you asked them to explain the broad issues, they responded politically.

Editorials generally favored the Minister. These opinion items are often written from background information like press releases, previously published items and related documents. The use of background information tends to reduce controversy and increase accuracy (Scanlon, 1972, p. 589). But its use in the preparation of editorials does not lessen the likelihood that the writer will take a strong position.

David Olinger (Interview, April 15, 1987) affirmed that this was the case. Of the 10 items published by the Grande Prairie Herald-Tribune, two were editorials and one was a column. These favored the minister. Editorials, Mr. Olinger said, are "not playing the same game" as news stories.

> Editorials have to take a stance so they have to take one side or the other. Most times when they take a stance, they don't weigh everything evenly. They come out in favor of one point of view. [Our editorials] basically said the ATA is going too far this time and bravo the Minister is putting them in line.

Although editorials are likely to exhibit some bias or favoritism, it was rather surprising to observe that news items showed a similar lack of neutrality. The content analysis showed that about as great a proportion of news items demonstrated bias as did

opinion items. Seventy-nine of 114 (69 percent) news items lacked balance while 44 of 57 (77 percent) of opinion items showed imbalance. This similarity in focus seems to suggest that reporters and editors may not be doing as good a job as they think in achieving balance in individual stories.

Letters-to-the-editor favored the ATA. Some of these were written by ATA staff, including the president, but most seemed to be written by teachers. Although it is impossible to determine how many letters were submitted but not published, twelve letters-to-the-editor seems like a small number considering the duration and importance of this issue. These few letters attest to the fact that COATS was not an issue that caught the public interest. It is apparent that this was one avenue for publicity that was not used well by the ATA. With the size of its membership, it had an advantage here that one Minister did not have. Although the Minister had written letters-to-the-editor on other issues, he did not write any on this issue.

In terms of location and viewpoint, there was a slight tendency to favor the ATA on the front pages and in the front sections of the papers. Page one, of course, consists of news stories while opinions items generally appear in the first section. Perhaps again this can be attributed to the newsworthiness of conflict and the ATA executive's tendency to be more sensational in their comments than the Minister. No major differences in the length of items were observed although the longest stories were the ones which expressed the strongest viewpoint for the ATA or for the Minister.

Summary

The coverage of COATS was extensive, when considering the whole province and particularly large cities. However, the coverage lacked detail. Rather than explaining the issue, the coverage overemphasized the controversial and sensational aspects of the story. Although balance was achieved overall, the majority of individual stories lacked balance. Thus, it failed the criteria set out in Chapter 2 for accuracy. Overemphasis of the negative,

dwelling on the sensational, and exclusive coverage of controversy and conflict lead to imbalance of coverage. This supported the suggestion that objectivity may not be achievable in reporting news.

Proposition 48. Quality in the coverage of a policy issue is more closely related to depth or detail than to breadth or extent of coverage.

Proposition 49. Policymakers do not perceive the print media as covering policy issues well because they give more coverage to the conflictual and sensational aspects of a policy story than to an in-depth examination of the issues.

Proposition 50. The majority of individual stories lack neutrality although overall balance might be achieved in covering a policy issue.

Proposition 51. The media's tendency to sensationalize the controversial aspects of a story gives rise to bias.

Proposition 52. The media reduce all controversies to two viewpoints.

Proposition 53. Media coverage of controversy polarizes the positions of the participants.

Impact of Media Coverage

Ten weeks after Mr. King announced his intention to form the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards, on June 21, 1985 he announced the membership of the Council. Two days earlier in separate press releases he and ATA President Nadene Thomas had indicated that both sides had arrived at a compromise which would permit the ATA to accept the Council and to appoint a member to the Council.

As Mr. King had said all along, he could have gone ahead without ATA support and without an ATA representative on the Council. He had received, as he claimed he would, 200 teacher nominations. Still, the Council would have been less effective without the acceptance of the ATA. It may have been stymied in its attempts to revise and suggest teacher evaluation policy and to investigate and hear cases of teacher competency. As Dr.

Bosetti (Interview, March 27, 1987) indicated anything that happens in education requires the cooperation of teachers to be effective.

> Without any doubt at all, the Council could have been formed [even without the ATA]. We wanted to form it with the cooperation and the support of the ATA. One does not proceed in education independently. You have different roles and authorities even as there are senior partners and junior partners in all kinds of issues. But in one so significant as teacher competence there is no way that we should have proceeded without every last effort to bring the ATA on side. We could have and I think Mr. King would have proceeded with the Council and it would have worked. But not as well as it has worked since then.

On the other hand, the ATA had set out to have the Council stopped or at the least be permitted to appoint teacher members. It was unsuccessful in achieving either aim. In this regard the Minister came out the winner. He had his Council. Permitting the ATA to appoint its member was a token compromise. However, the ATA executive were successful in obtaining a promise that negotiations would continue for a new Teaching Profession Act and that the Act would establish union and professional functions in a unicameral organization. According to Nadene Thomas, this was their great achievement. It remains to be seen whether future governments will live up to this promise. If the government does not establish a new Act as envisioned and decides to maintain the status quo by continuing to operate through COATS, then the ATA will have gained very little.

What brought about the compromise? And what impact did the mass media, particularly newspaper coverage, have on this policy decision?

As indicated by Martin Linsky (1986, pp. 145-146), "officials cannot be expected to identify instances when they altered their own best judgment because of influence they felt from newspapers and television." Policymakers do not say that the press has had an impact on their choices. Still, studies suggest some media impact. The press appears "to affect the odds in favor of one option or another rather than being the dominant force in policy determination."

David Olinger (Interview, April 15, 1987) expressed doubts about the influence of the media and about one's ability to measure it.

> Does the media affect anything? Sometimes we like to think so, but I don't know personally. You see a lot of people showing up at a meeting after you have done a major story. Whether it was your story or something else I don't know. You're never sure what effect your story has actually had?

Interviews with participants seem to indicate that the media coverage of COATS had only indirect influence on the settlement between the Minister and the ATA. Other influences had a more direct impact. One of these was the pressure of Progressive Conservative Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) on Mr. King to come to agreement. This pressure was exerted mainly because of the lobbying efforts of teachers, although unfavorable press coverage was a factor. Another influence was that of education officials, who as professionals were concerned about the image of education in the province. A further influence, but one of lesser importance, was the effect of a deteriorating relationship on the operation of the Department of Education.

MLA Influence on the Minister

Mass media coverage certainly had some effect on bringing the Conservative MLAs to put pressure on the Minister. As indicated by Dr. Bosetti (Interview, March 27, 1987), the government does not like to be seen at "war" with interest groups in the province. Newspaper and other media coverage caused concern among Conservative MLAs about the government's public image. The media helped to bring the debate to the attention of the MLAs, said Dr. Bosetti. "As a minister in the government, Mr. King would have had to be prepared to take some action. He couldn't just go on fighting."

More important, however, then bad press was the effect of teacher contacts with MLAs. "I think the contact that teachers had with MLAs and the letter writing, the petitions were much more effective than the media approach," said ATA President Thomas (Interview, April 14, 1987).

> There is no question in my mind that it was the pressure on the MLAs that finally brought pressure from the Premier on Dave King. I have had a number of people since that time tell me that caucus meetings got very hot because the local MLAs couldn't take the pressure anymore. They began

> to realize the minister had not given complete truth in some of the statements that he had been making both to them as colleagues in the house and as members of the caucus and to the press.
>
> It had [also] become within the party quite obvious to all of those within the House that Lougheed was beginning to make his transition from leader and Premier to private citizen and they didn't want to have that kind of heat going on at the time when they would be seeking a new leader or when they would be seeking a new mandate in the Legislature. And for purely political reasons, which were quite just, Mr. King lost the kind of clout he had had in the caucus.

Dr. Keeler (Interview, March 30, 1987) added:

> That was the reason we got any kind of settlement. It was because there was heat on Mr. King in the caucus. It wasn't the first time either. MLAs talked openly about King getting the government into trouble again. They went to him in fair numbers and said words to the effect: "You may be perfectly right, but the teachers are mad so stop doing it." They weren't particularly involved in the fundamental issues, but they were quite sensitive to the heat and passed it on.
>
> There were very few MLAs who were prepared to stand up in front of a group of teachers and defend Mr. King. Again, we didn't realize how little basic, continuing support he had within the caucus until he decided he was going to have a try for the leadership. I heard that he found only two MLAs who would support him.

Mr. Vivone (Interview, March 24, 1987) admitted that the Minister's office had not done a good job in keeping the MLAs informed about the issue. When reached by teachers, MLAs were unable to respond to their concerns or defend the Minister's position. As he said: "Our problem with the MLAs is that we didn't have the wisdom to alert them in advance to what we were doing. We didn't explain COATS to them, why it was being done, and more importantly what they could expect." Yet, Mr. Vivone said he felt Mr. King had the support of most MLAs including Premier Peter Lougheed. "If anything was out of kilter about this, the Premier would have [said something]. He had a firm hand on his ministers and, if anything was creating political problems for the government, he stepped in." Still Mr. Vivone acknowledged that there were MLAs who would be satisfied with Mr. King's explanation and then go back to teachers and say they talked to him but he wouldn't listen.

Of the 79 members of the Legislature, 75 were Conservatives. Thirteen of the legislators were certified teachers; eleven of these were members of the Conservative

caucus. According to ATA staff member Allan Jamha (Interview, April 28, 1988), the conflict between David King and the ATA "put teacher MLAs in an awkward position between loyalty to the Association and to caucus." Most of the teachers in caucus chose not to attend the ATA information meetings, but their influence would have certainly been felt in caucus meetings and among other MLAs, said Mr. Jamha.

It was when MLAs started talking about the issue in caucus that Mr. King began to pay attention. Mr. Vivone described the effect of the MLAs on Mr. King.

> MLAs are important. They were getting mixed signals. I guess you have to remember they are political people. The thing they are more concerned about than anything else is getting re-elected. They were subjected to at least a letter writing campaign in the constituencies and I would think there were a fair number of phone calls.

The campaign including letter writing and petitions to the Minister of Education had less effect. Mr. Vivone described how the Minister's office regarded the petitions.

> We used to get these petitions in our office from Barnett House. You couldn't tell what school they were from, so what good were they. Our idea was that if you haven't the guts to tell us who you are what's the point of it. It's like writing anonymous letters-to-the-editor. [The petitions] were all post marked Edmonton. They all came from the same place, which means they were all screened by the ATA.
>
> We have always felt in the Minister's office that a well thought out handwritten or typewritten letter, even if it was only one and it made a reasonable point, carried a lot more weight than any kind of petitions.

Thus, although the letter writing and petitions to the Minister had less impact, the ATA campaign was very effective with MLAs. Because of this effect on MLAs, it would seem that the ATA had the upper hand at the time of negotiations. Why did they stop the campaign which was so successful before getting a less than optimum solution? The answer was hinted at by Mrs. Thomas (Interview, April 14, 1987) who described her concerns at the time:

> One of the things ... that I very deliberately did was never refer to the government as the opposition in this matter. I very clearly always made a statement about David King and about the Minister. In my mind it was him , not the government, and I think it was important for us to isolate him in this fight. But you reach a point when you have to decide whether you are going to win or in the process of isolation lose more if you crush your opponent. North Americans always are prone to leap to the defense of the

> underdog and I had no desire to make King an underdog. I wanted him always to have the benefit of what he deserved. I wouldn't want to create a martyr, make him an underdog, get him any empathy from anybody.... I think it would have been possible to go further and crush him totally.

Influence of Education Officials

The second major influence in bringing about the negotiated settlement was the concern of education officials about the public image of education. Particularly concerned were Dr. Reno Bosetti, deputy minister of education, and Dr. Bernie Keeler, executive secretary of the ATA. Both former teachers, they were worried about the bad press the conflict was giving educators. Because of this concern, they encouraged their bosses to settle their disagreements. Mrs. Thomas (Interview, April 14, 1987) gave a major part of the credit for the final settlement to Dr. Bosetti who she said "was a very strong person in that partnership" with the Minister.

As Dr. Bosetti (Interview, March 27, 1987) noted:

> Both [the ATA and government] recognized the futility of fighting publicly. Our concerns basically were that the whole of education was getting a bad image because of this debate, unnecessarily so and unfairly so. So when both parties recognized that I think that's when it was agreed that we should find a solution.

One factor which made the ATA executive realize the need for a settlement was that teachers were commenting about the adverse reaction of their neighbors and friends to the controversy. Teachers "don't enjoy being asked in the neighborhood, "Why can't the ATA and the Minister come to agreement?" said Dr. Keeler (Interview, March 30, 1987).

Calgary Herald Legislature reporter Wayne Kondro (Interview, April 1, 1987) observed:

> Teachers have never defended incompetence. The ATA had no choice but to give in to King. There was no percentage in perpetuating the antagonism. Every story raised questions about teacher competence. It was in their interest to have the issue resolved. They realized they couldn't win on this issue.

In addition, the ATA executive felt that they would soon be dealing with a new minister. Dr. Keeler (Interview, March 30, 1987) said:

> We also believed that if the development of COATS proceeded with or without us it would take a lot longer to come to an operational state than Mr. King was proposing or planning and that before it did he would be gone. We felt we might have better luck with a successor than with Mr. King. If we had some sort of facesaving compromise out of the Minister, then we could wait for nature to take its course. And it did.

The possible effect of a worsening relationship between the ATA and the Department was of particular concern to Dr. Bosetti. The Department's committee structure depends upon ATA appointed teacher representatives who serve primarily as curriculum consultants. Without this part-time assistance the Department would have to hire full-time consultants who would quickly get out of touch with what is happening in the classrooms.

Influence of Media Coverage

One thing all parties agreed about was that the press had no direct effect in bringing about the settlement . "The media's effect was neutral," said Dr. Keeler (Interview, March 30, 1987). Rather the parties agreed that the result of press coverage was to promote the controversy instead of bringing about compromise. The press did not help the parties communicate, but, as Dr. Bosetti (Interview, March 27, 1987) said, the media "did much to inflame the situation and very little to resolve it."

However, indirectly the press coverage influenced MLAs and government and ATA officials. Mrs. Thomas (Interview, April 14, 1987) said:

> I don't think the mass media played a very significant role at all except to coalesce the feelings of teachers and to make the MLAs understand the enormity of what was occurring.... I suppose that the one thing that I might say that maybe the press did play a role was making it known to everybody's MLA, members of the public, teachers, everybody, that teachers were not about to quit, that they were about to fight, that they had taken a stand and they were going to live and die by that stand.

It seems that Mr. King had immunized himself against bad press and would have continued the conflict or gone ahead without the ATA had not his deputy minister intervened and had he not been pressured from MLAs (Rich Vivone, Interview, March 24, 1987). Dr. Keeler (March 30, 1987) thought the media coverage would have had to be more one sided to have had any effect on the Minister.

> Media coverage didn't have any effect on the Minister in a directional sense. I suspect that the media coverage generated some public reactions to the Minister but not weighted heavily one way or another. I don't think the media coverage generated response on one side of the issue. If a politician gets mixed responses, he thinks everything is fine. It is only if he gets strong responses in one direction that he is inclined to reconsider.

Rich Vivone (Interview, March 24, 1987) said the Minister felt the regular news coverage was so one sided in favor of the ATA that he ignored it and went to the openline shows on radio to get a sense of public feelings. The comments he heard through talk shows either favored his position or showed that people weren't interested. The Minister might have reacted differently to press coverage had it showed strong public opinion supporting the ATA. Only 12 letters-to-the-editor were published, most of these from ATA officers and teachers.

Whereas Journal editor Linda Hughes (Interview, April 21, 1987) felt the print coverage, by conveying publicly "the concerns of interested parties," might have had an influence on the Minister's decision to negotiate, David King disagreed.

> I think we lost time; I think we lost good will towards each other; I think both of us lost some flexibility in our capacity to negotiate as a result of the media coming in and sort of figuratively pouring concrete around our feet and then giving each of us baseball bats.... By and large I think the media does not have a good effect in any situation where there are hard decisions to be made.

Personal Effect on the Minister

A side effect of this public debate was the impact it had on Mr. King's political future. As Rich Vivone indicated (Interview, March 24, 1987), Mr. King's support for the party leadership was eroded as a result of the media coverage of the issue and a year later his bid for re-election failed, again partly because of bad press.

Although Mr. King had not announced his candidacy for the party leadership, it is well known that he aspired for the premiership. Rich Vivone (Interview, March 24, 1987) told about Mr. King's problems related to the leadership race and about his losing his seat in the Legislature.

> Somebody went out and ordered a phone system; somebody went out and rented some office space; and David had not told anybody or said to anybody that he was going to run [for the party leadership]. There was no question that he was interested, but he had not made a definite commitment. A poll was done and David was one of the people who commissioned that. [After receiving the results of the poll,] I remember him coming over to my house [and saying,] "I'm not going to run...."
>
> Two days later suddenly there was this stuff in the paper [about the phone system and office space]. I asked him if he knew anything about it and he said, "I knew it was happening but I didn't stop it." There was a lot of money spent and there were a lot of problems [which] developed into serious political problems for David. There's no question that the trust he had in several people was misplaced. In my view, some people around him were more interested in King becoming Premier than he was.
>
> That seems to be the beginning. There was the COATS thing and then there was [the political problems which] I am convinced led to his defeat. One of the things that happened after he became a cabinet minister [was] he put all of his energy into it and didn't leave enough energy for the constituency.... I think people in his constituency would read the paper and see King fighting about this and King fighting about that. My personal assessment was that people would read this and every day it was a reminder that they never saw him around the constituency. "He is so busy being a cabinet minister that he doesn't have time to talk to us." The COATS thing, the leadership were just reminders to people.... He is somewhere else. They told him in the end and it was loud and clear.

Summary

Studies in mass communications effect suggest that the news media have some impact, but not a strong influence in policy making (Gormley, 1975; Lambeth, 1978; Gordon et al., 1982; Abrams and Hawkins, 1984; Fico, 1984; and Linsky, 1986). Media coverage of the public debate about the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards seems to confirm these findings in that the print media had little direct effect upon the settlement between the Minister and the ATA. Rather it had indirect effect in that it made the Conservative MLAs aware of the conflict and uneasy about it. Media attention also created concern about the public image of education among officials of both the Department and the ATA. It was the influence of the MLAs and his deputy minister on the Minister of Education and that of the executive secretary on the ATA Executive which brought about agreement.

At least one other force had influence in bringing about the compromise. The impact of the lobbying efforts of teachers, particularly on Conservative MLAs, cannot be discounted. Less effective were their attempts to pressure the Minister through letter-writing and petitions.

Media coverage had little impact on the public, partly because of the ineffectiveness of the press in explaining the issue and partly because the Council did not affect the public directly. Any effort by either party to mobilize the public through the media were futile.

Media coverage had a side-effect in that it tarnished both the image of the Teachers' Association and the Minister. The effect on the Minister was much more devastating in that media coverage contributed to his decision to not pursue the Conservative Party leadership and to his personal defeat in the subsequent provincial election.

As Linsky (1986, p. 145) suggested, "officials cannot be expected to identify instances when they altered their own best judgment because of influence they felt from newspapers and television." Although the participants in this case could be denying the real impact of the media, still the interviews clearly indicated that the MLAs probably had the greatest influence on the Minister in bringing about a compromise. In addition, coverage was neither of the kind nor depth to affect policy making profoundly. Coverage was superficial, dwelling more on the elements of conflict than on the issues.

Dr. Keeler (Interview, March 30, 1987) summarized his thoughts about the effect of media coverage and about the reasons for the agreement this way:

> I don't think the media coverage of this issue changed the positions of the Minister or of the Alberta Teachers' Association. I think there was change in the positions of the parties but not related to media coverage.
>
> The change on the part of the Minister was primarily because he found out he had very little support in caucus. That in turn was because teachers communicated to their MLAs that they were upset about what the Minister was doing.
>
> The change on the part of the ATA came from a belief that we needed to find some compromise. We could not, we didn't think, sustain forever the position of anger and daring the Minister to do his damndest. Our members were not interested in ongoing confrontation. They will confront an issue, but they don't enjoy it.

Proposition 54. The media have indirect impact on policy decisions.

Proposition 55. Politicians mistrust the media and discount their viewpoint on policy issues because of past experiences with negative news coverage.

Proposition 56. The groups, competing for the politicians' attention, generally have greater influence than the news media on the politician.

Proposition 57. Group members are influenced more than policymakers by media coverage; the group members, in turn, put pressure on the policymakers.

Proposition 58. The media influence in setting the public agenda is tempered by their inability to explain issues well.

Proposition 59. The media will have little effect in shaping the public agenda on those matters in which the public shows little interest.

Proposition 60. Media coverage of an issue affects the political and personal lives of the participants.

The Role of the Print Media in Covering COATS

In Chapter 2, the first three policy stages were identified as (a) problem identification/ articulation, (b) policy recommendation/ aggregation and (c) policy decision/ adoption. The media functioned in the first stage in identifying problems suggested by the news media, by policymakers, by stakeholders, or by the public. In the policy recommendation/ aggregation stage, the media identified policymaker proposals, groups and their proposals, and suggested content. In the policy decision/ adoption stage, they set the tempo for decision making, recommended how to vote, and informed the public of policy content.

Black (1982, p. 249) suggested a hierarchy of three roles for the news media in the political process and attributed a number of political functions to each role. Under the role of common carrier are the functions of data circulation, interest expression, mobilization, stereotyping, interest aggregation and political socialization. Under the higher role of

reporter are the functions of legitimation, watchdog, recruitment, context-setting, agenda-setting, decision-scheduling and also political socialization. Finally, categorized under the role of political actor are integration, ombudsman, issue creation, value manipulation, opinion forming and issue resolution.

During the 10-week public debate, coverage of COATS functioned in a number of roles in these policy stages. In addition, the print media served to greater or lesser degrees as common carriers, as reporters, and as political actors. In each, they filled a number, but not all, of Black's political functions.

Policy Development in COATS

On March 29, 1985, Minister of Education announced a policy decision -- the formation of the Council of Alberta Teaching Standards. Problems had been experienced in handling the competence review of teachers for almost twenty years. From time to time efforts were made to articulate these problems and to aggregate proposals in the development of a new Teaching Profession Act. Attempts at policy development were vigorously renewed during the tenure as Minister of Mr. King. These failed in 1981 when the ATA executive made their objections known in public and failed again in 1984 when the Alberta School Trustees' Association vetoed an agreement between the Minister and the ATA for a new Act.

During the years prior to the COATS decision, a number of events drew attention to the need for a mechanism to review teacher performance. Foremost among these examples of problem identification was the Keegstra Affair. The resulting Committee on Tolerance and Understanding further identified and articulated the problem and made policy recommendations in its report released in the fall of 1984. In January 1985 the ATA proposed the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education (ACOTE) to replace the Board of Teacher Education and Certification (BTEC). Then on February 11, 1985 ATA President Nadene Thomas in a letter to Mr. King indicated the ATA's unwillingness to pursue

negotiations for a new Teaching Profession Act as long as the ASTA had the right to veto any revisions. It was this letter which convinced the Minister to proceed unilaterally with the formation of COATS.

By the time of the COATS decision the policy had passed through distinct problem identification and policy recommendation stages. With the ATA reaction following the announcement of COATS, policy development seemed to backtrack to the policy recommendation/ aggregation stage. The ATA were again presenting policy proposals, either to change the format of COATS or to abolish the Council entirely. Mr. King's agreement to meet with the ATA executive on April 26 and the exchange of counter proposals affirmed his willingness to open the COATS decision up for further policy recommendation. A policy decision was again made with the negotiated compromise announced on June 18.

Calgary Herald reporter Wayne Kondro (Interview, April 1, 1987) described the COATS decision as a "classic approach of the Lougheed Tories," overstate and then back off so that the other side feels it has made gains. This review of the case seems to contradict Mr. Kondro's view.

Journal editor Linda Hughes (Interview, April 21, 1987) argued that "part of the reality" is that the government uses the mass media to get feedback.

> I guess there is a lot of private polling done and governments respond now to private polling -- much more than they did in the past -- but in terms of individual issues how else can they gauge [public opinion] other than to announce their intention and then get the feedback. Certainly politicians use us as trial balloons. We often can sense that this is really a trial balloon but not that they really are doing this. And to that extent of course we become part of the policy process.
>
> Should we? Of course,we should never be an arm of a public body. But in doing our job which is to keep the public informed about their society, about their community, about their government, then I suppose it is a natural outgrowth that we will be part of what makes society work.

Again, the facts of the case seem to contradict this view. This was not a trial balloon to test reaction.

The decision to go ahead with the Council was born out of frustration with the negotiation process and a perceived need for some action. The Minister realized he could not go ahead with revisions to the Teaching Profession Act without approval of the stakeholder groups. On the other hand, he was within his rights to form a Council through a ministerial order, which he chose to do. Participants from both sides of the conflict attested to the Minister's sincerity in his claim that he would go ahead without the ATA, if necessary. It was only because of pressure from Conservative MLAs and because of the persuasion of his own deputy that he accepted compromise.

Media Functions

News coverage of the negotiations for a new Teaching Profession Act was inconsistent. It peaked in 1981 when the ATA executive rejected the Minister's proposal and chose to go public with their reaction. Coverage in 1982 and 1983, dealing with teacher competence, concerned the Keegstra Affair. In late 1983 and in 1984, although there was some publicity about the trustees' proposal for a College of Teachers and about the Ghitter report findings, the bulk of media coverage dealt with items peripherally related to the Act, such as teacher evaluation, recertification, and the internship. Otherwise negotiations occurred far from public view.

The ATA went public with its reaction to the Council decision because they felt powerless to do anything without public support. Although the policy was set, they obviously felt changes could be made or that policy implementation could be stopped. Ultimately, they realized that they were not going to get public support, that the news media coverage was confusing teachers rather than clarifying the issue, and that it would be impossible to negotiate a settlement through the press. Although much of the coverage of the Minister's viewpoint was based on his comments in the House, he also came to a realization of the futility of debating the ATA through the news media. Thus, during Period 2 media coverage virtually stopped.

What then was the role of the news media? During the years prior to the announcement of the Council, with coverage of the Keegstra Affair and other stories about teacher performance and ATA discipline, the press played a problem identification role. Coverage of the ATA reaction to the 1981 draft of the Teaching Profession Act identified problems as well as proposals for their solution from policymakers and interest groups. Editorials offered some suggestions about the content or nature of the policy. Similarly, coverage of the findings of the Committee on Tolerance and Understanding identified problems and policy proposals as did coverage of the trustees' College of Teachers proposal. Interestingly, whereas coverage of Keegstra-type stories only identified problems, items about policy recommendations generally identified both a problem and a proposed solution.

With the policy announcement on March 29, 1985, the media functioned in informing the public of the policy content. Generally stories included evaluation or reaction to the Council policy with a description of the policy content. Only one story in the afternoon Edmonton Journal of March 29 was a pure description of policy content. Immediate evaluation or reaction to policy content seems to be an additional media function at the policy decision/ adoption stage. Reaction articles are distinct from problem identification in stage one because they propose changes to a policy rather than identifying a problem in search of a policy solution. Because the COATS decision did not require legislative assent there was no recommendation of how to vote. In addition, there did not seem to be any efforts by the news media to set the tempo of decision making, although some editorials suggested a need to quickly resolve the conflict between the Minister and the ATA (Calgary Herald, April 11, 1985, p. A4; Calgary Sun, April 12, 1985, p. 4).

At the point of backtracking to the policy recommendation stage, the press also identified groups and proposals, although coverage of content and reaction to the content continued. The major interest group of course was the ATA, but in addition there was extensive coverage of Ron Ghitter's criticism of the policy and proposal for its change. The

Minister seldom discussed proposals for change of the policy either through the media or in the Legislature, although on one occasion in the House he discussed the principles set forth at the April 26 meeting with the ATA executive (Alberta Hansard, May 7, 1985, pp. 835, 836; Edmonton Journal, May 8, 1985, p. B3). Until the end, he seemed to stand firm on the composition and principles governing the operation of the Council.

One of the roles suggested by Black (1982, p. 249) was that of common carrier. All this coverage certainly served as some form of communication, although this was denied or the quality of communication was disputed by the participants. Nadene Thomas (Interview, April 14, 1987) claimed that the media had done little to facilitate communication between the parties, nor did they explain the issue well to the public:

> We didn't use the media to communicate. Whenever I had anything to say I said it very directly, either by phone or by letter. And when we got to the final throes of the confrontation, letters that I wrote I also sent copies to the Premier.
>
> I'm not sure that the media ever explained the issue well enough that the public in general understood what the fight was about. They understood that there was a fight and I think they saw it very personally as being between David King and Nadene Thomas. The people who read the press and were concerned about the issue were teachers themselves and MLAs. And I think if there was a change in views due to the press, I think it would be amongst those two groups. I think that it certainly coalesced the feelings of teachers to see their profession muddied in the press. I think that for MLAs that kind of coverage forced them to quit using the kind of preprinted pap that they were being sent all the time.

Dr. Reno Bosetti (Interview, March 27, 1987) indicated that the press did not serve a function of clarifying the issue; rather it intensified and distorted the conflict.

> The position of government was never made clear. There seemed to be no interest in clarifying because if that was the case then the conflict was gone essentially.... [although] the controversy was not created by the media, it was kept alive by them.
>
> In fact, [the media] simply inflated rather than helping communication. They tended to pick on areas of disagreement rather than agreement.

Calgary Herald reporter Wayne Kondro (Interview, April 1, 1987) blamed failure to communicate on the Minister and the ATA. "The print media can be used as a means of

communicating between parties, " he said, "but it depends on the degree of willingness to communicate. In COATS both parties were too polarized."

Mobilization is another of Black's functions included in the common carrier role. Dr. Keeler (Interview, March 30, 1987) indicated that it is difficult to mobilize teachers or the public through the mass media. He said that most of their efforts in dealing with the media are spent trying to correct incorrect information. "The reason we respond in the media is to telegraph to the teachers a reply to whatever else they might have been reading." In addition, he said "the amount of information [is] just too much." It is much more effective to use internal communications and member information meetings.

In dealing with the public, Dr. Keeler declared:

> If we wanted to use the media on an issue this complex, it would have taken a long time. Using the media as means of educating the public is possible if the issue is easily encapsulated but when it isn't it would take a lot of effort and a lot of time and it probably wouldn't work anyway. But if you were optimistic of success you would have to have a period of months whereas Mr. King was moving very quickly.... Going directly from the media to the public to the government is such a lengthy process.

From the government viewpoint, Dr. Bosetti agreed that using the media is an impractical way to reach teachers.

> In dealing with an organization like the ATA, I don't think the print media have very much impact on the ATA members per se. The real impact is through the ATA's own internal communications.... Communication becomes almost direct between the ATA and its members regardless of what is in the press....
>
> Basically what we found [through COATS] is that we don't have the capacity to communicate with teachers. We are hostage to what the ATA tells teachers or with what the media translates our communication to be.... So whenever there is a dispute the government is certainly at a tremendous disadvantage.

Agenda setting and watchdog are two functions Black suggests are reporting roles. Although he did not use these terms, Dr. Bosetti indicated that the media performed the agenda setting and watchdog functions by informing MLAs and the public about the conflict and by establishing it on the public agenda. As he put it: "The media certainly

served to bring to the attention of government members, not so much the nature of the debate, but more that there was a debate."

In relation to the public and agenda setting, Dr. Bosetti noted:

> It painted government as being overbearing, inflexible. But public awareness of the need for teachers to be evaluated was heightened by the media coverage.... It certainly enhanced public awareness of the situation. I think that was a useful function.

Two of Black's functions under the political actor category are issue creation and issue resolution. David King (Interview, March 24, 1987) indicated that he felt the effect of the mass media in policy making generally was negative. In support of this opinion he cited the media treatment of COATS and also of the efforts in 1981 to get a new Teaching Profession Act. In the latter case, according to Mr. King, "the ATA fired up the media. In face of that, caucus decided not to proceed with the Teaching Profession Act." Mr. King expressed the belief that the media should play a mediating role,which he defined as "nurturing, causing growth, causing healing." But, he said, "If I were to say one of the roles of the newspaper is to cause healing I don't think you would believe it."

Dr. Bosetti and Dr. Keeler echoed concern about the ill effects of media coverage. "I think it did much to inflame the situation and very little to resolve it," observed Dr. Bosetti. Dr. Keeler also did not think the media were interested in bringing about agreement. "I think they were just reporting," he declared.

There was very little discussion of the issues, at least in depth. The editorial pages suggested some ideas for policy content, but most of these were limited to what the ATA was proposing. However, concern for the negative effect of media coverage was a factor in the resolution. Because of teacher and government concerns about negative media coverage, the decision was made to stop talking to the press and to start negotiating.

Black suggested the media also function in describing the context and background of issues, in developing stereotypes, and in changing opinions. They also serve an ombudsman role. Because of the lack of depth in coverage of COATS, the media did

poorly in describing the context and background in this case. Stereotypes were reinforced by media coverage of the conflict. As Dr. Bosetti suggested, government was painted as "overbearing, inflexible." In addition, the image of the ATA "putting teachers before education" was probably intensified. Also, it is unlikely that opinions were changed and the press dwelt too much on controversy to be an ombudsman.

Summary

Press coverage of the COATS policy and the events leading up to it incorporated most of the functions described in Chapter 2 as relating to the first three stages in policy development: problem identification, policy recommendation, and policy decision. An additional function in the policy decision stage was noted in the study, that of immediate policy evaluation and reaction. In addition, present in the coverage of COATS were many of Black's functions, including information circulation, stereotyping, watchdog, agenda setting, and issue creation. Others were less evident such as context-setting and issue resolution.

That the media functioned better in some areas than others seems to be related to the media's approach to covering policy issues. While coverage of conflict will enhance the functions like information circulation, stereotyping, watchdog, agenda setting, and issue-creation, the lack of in-depth coverage will inhibit context-setting and issue resolution.

This study confirms the suggestion from the literature that the press performs a greater function in identifying and relaying interest group proposals than they do in articulation and identification of problems and in offering solutions. Most press coverage in COATS functioned in a common carrier role, relaying the viewpoints and proposals of either the Minister or the ATA for the makeup and about the need for the Council. Editorials generally suggested ending the conflict rather than suggesting solutions. In relaying ATA concerns, the press also served a watchdog function. Little coverage dealt with the

underlying reasons for the conflict, with the purposes for a mechanism to direct practice reviews of teachers, or with suggestions for solving the problems.

Proposition 61. The media serve a number of important functions in the policymaking process, including identification of problems, of policymaker proposals, of interest groups and their proposals, of policy content, and of reactions to policy.

Proposition 62. The media function better in the roles of information circulation, stereotyping, watchdog, agenda-setting, and issue creation than in the roles of context-setting and issue resolution.

Proposition 63. The press does better in relaying policymaker and interest group concerns and proposals than they do in identifying problems or suggesting solutions.

Summary of Findings

To assess the role of the print media in policy making, this chapter examined each of the four sub-problems of the study in relation the formation of the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards: a) the criteria used to judge newsworthiness in COATS, b) the level of accuracy, balance and depth of coverage, c) the impact of the print media on the policy decision, and d) the functions of the media in the policy decision.

Probably the most important criteria for choosing COATS as newsworthy was the drama and action involved in the confrontation between the Minister of Education and the Alberta Teachers' Association. It became more interesting to the media because of the personalities of the two protagonists, David King and Nadene Thomas. Of lesser importance in determining newsworthiness were the criteria related to impact and uniqueness. The story had only direct impact on the public through the teachers. Also, concerned were the MLAs who worried about public opinion. Although the announcement of the Council provided a new angle, the issues were not unique but rather they were the basis of a running story which had been covered over a number of years. This suggests another criterion for deciding what's news: the amount of previous coverage of the issue.

Breadth and depth and balance of coverage were considered as measures of accuracy. The coverage was extensive, when considering the whole province and particularly large cities. However, the coverage lacked detail. Rather than explaining the issue, the coverage overemphasized the controversial and sensational aspects of the story. Although balance was achieved overall, the majority of individual stories lacked balance.

The print media had little direct effect upon the settlement between the Minister and the ATA. Rather it had an indirect effect in that it made the Conservative MLAs aware of the conflict and it created concern about the public image of education among education officials. It was the influence of these groups on the Minister of Education and the ATA Executive which brought about agreement.

Press coverage of COATS policy and the events leading up to it incorporated most of the functions in the first three stages in policy development: problem identification, policy recommendation, and policy decision. An additional function in the policy decision stage was noted, that of immediate policy evaluation and reaction. Nevertheless, the press performed a greater function in identifying and relaying interest group proposals than they did in the identification of problems and in offering solutions. Also, the coverage of conflict enhanced some functions while the lack of depth inhibited others.

Chapter 8

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS

This final chapter presents an overview of the study. The first section describes the rationale for the study and defines the problem for investigation. The conceptual bases of the study is followed by a description of how the investigation was pursued and data gathered and analyzed. Findings expressed as propositions are listed. The second section draws upon the conceptual bases and the propositions to formulate conclusions which are the major findings of the study. The chapter concludes with a statement of the implications of the study for journalists, policymakers and interest groups as well as for scholars.

Summary

This section describes (a) the study's rationale and problem statement, (b) the relevant literature supporting a conceptual bases for the research, (c) the research design and approach to data analysis, and (d) the propositions derived from the data.

Rationale for the Study

The literature about political communication assumes mass media influence in policy making but the degree of impact is uncertain. One reason for this uncertainty may be that the mass media are only one of many factors influencing policymakers. This suggests that insights about the mass media's role may possibly be obtained through consideration of their relationship in the total or overall policy process. Thus, a naturalistic approach, examining mass media coverage within the context of policy making, was adopted for this study.

A major portion of studies in mass media and politics have examined mass media coverage of elections. Other studies have examined elected officials and their use of the mass media and the influence of the mass media on legislation. Fewer studies have examined mass media effects on policy making in the government department. It was at this

latter level that this investigation addressed the question of mass media impact in political decision making.

The research problem in this study was to define the relationship of the print media to the policy-making process. In responding to this problem, four major questions were addressed in relation to print media coverage of the formation of the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards (COATS): (a) What criteria did reporters and editors use to determine whether comments, events or issues related to COATS were newsworthy? (b) How well was COATS covered in terms of accuracy, balance and depth? (c) What impact did the print media have on the policy decision? (d) What functions did the print media serve in the policy making context?

Conceptual Bases of the Study

A number of conclusions were derived from the literature which served as the conceptual bases for the study. These proved valuable in guiding the collection and analysis of data and in developing the propositions which emerged from the data as findings. These conclusions are enumerated below.

Mass Media and Politics

1. Rather than having great influence in changing attitudes and opinions, the mass media structure the knowledge and perceptions people have about what is important and about how they view reality. Journalists are not simply "gate-keepers" of information but are "shapers of the public consciousness."

2. The effect of the mass media on people and on institutions is best described in complex rather than simple linear models.

3. The mass media play a role in a variety of everyday political activities, not just at election time.

4. As "independents" in the political environment, people rely heavily on information from the mass media when making up their minds rather than on statements

and publications coming from government or party officials. However, mass media consumers are not easily manipulated nor controlled by the mass media. But, because of the pervasiveness of media coverage and because people have become avid media consumers, the media have made people more knowledgeable about politics and less subject to the influences of opinion leaders.

5. Television has played a prominent role in restructuring the political audience and also has affected the way newspapers cover events and the way politicians and other news sources approach the news media.

Criteria for Newsworthiness

6. Journalists judge newsworthiness of a story on the basis of a number of criteria. A story must involve important people, affect many lives, and be interesting. It must be new, unique, and have qualities of drama and action. It must also appeal to a wide audience. Timing and space requirements must be right. How the competition is covering the story is also a consideration as is the angle or framing of the story.

7. These criteria have evolved over time, but most recently they have been affected by the advent of television and the concentration of ownership. Other media have had to conform to television's standards and approaches in order to appeal to a wider audience, and thereby meet the owners' expectations for profits.

8. The results of these trends has been to focus on public rather than private abuses of power, a more cynical, confrontational style and an emphasis on style over content. Conflict and controversy make a story interesting and provide drama and action. Short articles with catchy headlines have replaced in-depth coverage. Most of the media present the "same common or homogeneous media version" of political happenings.

Quality in News Coverage

9. News coverage is considered accurate when it is comprehensive and balanced.

10. Comprehensiveness of coverage is judged in terms of breadth (extent) and depth (detail). Extent of coverage is determined by the number and length of stories. Detail is measurable by the aspects and issues covered.

11. Balanced reports include "both sides" of a story. Overemphasis of the negative, dwelling on the sensational, and exclusive coverage of controversy and conflict can lead to imbalance.

12. Balanced stories are "more objective." Objectivity is also achieved by maintaining detachment from the news. Yet, impartiality is not possible, because even choices of what to cover are subjective. In addition, individual commentary has gone beyond the editorial staff and is no longer limited to the editorial pages.

Mass Media Impact on Policy Making

13. The influence of the mass media on policy decisions has declined, particularly among newspapers. Rather than filling an interpretative role, newspapers have followed the lead of television in emphasizing political leaders over issues.

14. Although the media serve as a link between politicians and the public, the decline of the partisan press means that politicians no longer have control over the messages that reach the public.

15. Although there is some evidence that the mass media set political agendas, the amount of influence is uncertain. Competing agenda-setters using personal contact may have greater influence. Television competes with newspapers in agenda-setting, except that typically newspapers act as agenda-setters for other media including television.

16. The media influence how people see reality. Recognizing this, politicians compete with the media to control the view of reality that is presented.

17. The mass media are image-builders and as such "make or break" politicians. Image becomes more important than substance. A perception of strong leadership is more important than positions on issues.

18. The mass media are ineffective in bringing about change unless combined with other influences. Opinion leaders, party workers, government bureaucrats and interest groups also play a role in influencing politicians and policy. In addition, public opinion has a strong influence on politicians. By influencing these groups, the media has an indirect influence on policy.

19. The mass media at the federal level exerts considerable influence, but virtually ignores many aspects of government, while focusing mainly on the Legislature and Question Period. At the provincial level, where reporters are less specialized than federally, coverage of many government activities is even more sparse. Municipally, reporters rarely understand local government, centering coverage on personal conflicts at the council level. Newspapers seem to play a greater role at the provincial and municipal levels because of the lesser role played by television.

20. Newspapers are no longer the only source of political news and commentary, although they are unrivalled in their capacity to gather news and cover events in depth. Yet, they often fail to do this because they are too preoccupied with routine coverage or with keeping up with television.

21. The influence of the press seems to be greatest in the early stages of policy making where issues require clarification. The media help to set the policy agenda and to influence how an issue is understood by policymakers, interest groups, and the public. It is uncertain how much influence the press has on the policy itself. The press seems to influence the likelihood of certain policy choices being adopted rather than being a major force in policy determination.

Functions of the Mass Media in Policy Making

22. The mass media serve a number of functions in the policy process. Among these are presenting citizens with information that aids participation in politics, providing a forum for debate on the issues, helping government circulate information about public services and accomplishments, and giving opposition parties and groups opportunities to

criticize policy proposals and offer alternatives. Government may also use the press to test public opinion by presenting proposals as "trial balloons."

23. The press perform a greater function in identifying and relaying interest group proposals to the public than they do in the articulation and identification of problems. News items which impact policy decisions are few in number. More news items are published for information purposes rather than persuasion. The media serve more as common carriers, less as watchdogs, and least as policy actors.

24. Rather than playing a role as a political actor in influencing policy choices, the press has greater effect as common carriers of information and as watchdogs.

Research Design and Data Analysis

Although a preliminary research plan was developed in the thesis proposal, the design was allowed to emerge as a selection of the case was made and more was known about the situation. Firstly, a case study was selected by surveying education officials and interest group leaders. After a preliminary selection of a case, official documents and newspaper and magazine articles were gathered and a judgment was made about the appropriateness of the setting and the data. Then, in order to provide focus, a content analysis was done of the articles and propositions were developed from the analysis. The propositions were tested and further data about the case were gathered through interviews. Finally, the data were analyzed and the case was written up.

Selection of the case study. A survey of education officials was conducted to determine an appropriate case for study of print media coverage and educational policy making. Senior officials of Alberta Education were asked to rank recent initiatives of the department as to their educational importance and then also to indicate their perception of the amount and kind of mass media coverage of the initiatives. Their perceptions were then checked with senior administrators of the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) and the Alberta School Trustees' Association (ASTA).

Data collection. The data in this study were obtained from three main sources: (1) non-official documents including newspaper and magazine articles and editorials, (2) official documents, correspondence, minutes of meetings, reports and official publications, and (3) semi-structured interviews, which were tape recorded and transcribed.

The original set of newspaper and magazine articles were taken from clippings gathered by Alberta Education. These articles were checked against the articles clipped by the ATA and the Alberta Legislature library. Articles were added from these sources. A total of 171 articles formed the basis of the content analysis described in Chapter 5.

The "article" technique of content analysis was used because it is "easily and quickly" applied to both volume and slant of news and editorial content. Each newspaper item was identified by date, by publication, by sources, by kind, by viewpoint, by location and by length. In addition, a summary was written for each.

Comments by the Minister of Education and by other Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) made in the Legislature during Question Period about the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards were extracted from Alberta Hansard, the official record of the Legislature. In addition, other documents, such as minutes of meetings, correspondence, reports and official publications, were photocopied from the records of Alberta Education and the Alberta Teachers' Association and from the files of respondents at the time of the interviews.

Interviewing was the principal means of data collection. Twenty-one respondents were selected through purposive sampling. Interviews followed a semi-structured format with the use of an interview guide consisting of open-ended questions in order to obtain a maximum amount of information and to explore new questions that arose spontaneously during the discussion.

Data analysis. Data were analyzed inductively in order to define propositions from which the conclusions were developed. Preliminary propositions were developed from the content analysis of articles. These were tested with the respondents in interviews.

As the interviews proceeded, the propositions were modified to fit new facts or eliminated where aspects of the case defied explanation by the proposition. Some additional propositions were added. Through the process of analysis and writeup, the propositions were further refined so that propositions were prepared for each chapter of findings. Propositions from Chapters 4, 5 and 6 were used in developing propositions in Chapter 7. These lead to conclusions about the central question which are reported in Chapter 8.

As the data collection and analysis progressed, periodically discussions were held with colleagues, as a means of testing propositions and assuring good judgment. In addition, data and interpretations were checked with several of the subjects.

In writing up the case study, description not only provided the facts or events in the case, but also the characteristics of the context as the participants in the situation experienced it. An effort was made to present a picture of the actual participants in context, to provide essential data in a focused, conversation-like format, to illuminate meanings by focusing on essential points, and to build on the "tacit knowledge" of readers, thus giving a sense of the actual substance of the case.

Findings

The findings of the study are summarized in the form of 63 propositions. These propositions, often developed with limited empirical support, served as a mechanism for analysis from which conclusions were derived.

Historical Perspective.

The events and newspaper coverage prior to the establishment of COATS, described in Chapter 4, gave rise to the following propositions about the relationship of the mass media and the policy making process.

Proposition 1. Prior news coverage establishes an issue on the public agenda and once on the public agenda, the issue becomes more important to the political agenda.

Proposition 2. The mass media consider conflict and controversy as criteria for newsworthiness.

Proposition 3. Stories lack continuity in coverage because the news media generally are not proactive in developing stories but rather wait for events or reactions from sources.

Proposition 4. The news media will consider an issue important if it has been covered previously.

Content Analysis

Chapter 5 provided a content analysis of the items published about COATS during the two and a half month public debate. The following propositions were derived from this analysis.

Proposition 5. The amount of news coverage is not consistent over the duration of lengthy public debate.

Proposition 6. Large daily newspapers give greater coverage to policy issues than do smaller papers.

Proposition 7. Geographic proximity to the provincial capital is not a factor in influencing the amount of coverage of government business.

Proposition 8. Large city dailies carry more controversial news items than small city dailies which reserve their resources for announcements.

Proposition 9. The longer the debate the greater the likelihood that it will receive national, magazine or weekly news coverage.

Proposition 10. Interest group members are more available as sources than government officials and will be quoted as sources more frequently.

Proposition 11. Question Period in the Legislature provides a mutually beneficial opportunity for politicians to get press exposure and for reporters to get stories.

Proposition 12. Government officials have the advantage of announcing policy to get news coverage whereas interest groups have to rely on press need for reaction.

Proposition 13. The news media in smaller communities rely upon the reaction from interest group members to localize stories.

Proposition 14. Coverage of an issue must continue for some time before the public responds through letters-to-the-editor.

Proposition 15. Weeklies use editorials more often than news stories to cover stories where the sources are outside the communities.

Proposition 16. Journalists will keep news stories updated using current comments and happenings while they will draw from background information to write opinion items.

Proposition 17. One measure of public opinion about an issue is the number of letters-to-the-editor.

Proposition 18. Placement in the newspaper is an indication of the importance given to a story by the press.

Proposition 19. Small city dailies place policy stories closer to the front than do large city dailies.

Proposition 20. Comments that are more controversial or sensational receive better placement than comments that are less biased.

Proposition 21. The print media publish longer items about controversy than about reconciliation and official announcements.

Proposition 22. The length of items is a function of the kinds of items and the editing and reporting styles of different publications.

Proposition 23. Editorials and news stories are on average about the same length, while features and columns are longer and letters-to-the-editor are shorter.

Proposition 24. Items in the back sections of newspapers are smaller than in the front sections.

Proposition 25. Balance in individual items is more difficult to achieve than balance in overall coverage.

Proposition 26. News and opinion items show about the same level of imbalance.

Proposition 27. Balance in coverage in the same publication varies over time.

Proposition 28. Balance in coverage varies across publications and categories of publications depending on the nature of the reporting and editing.

Proposition 29. The item favors the source if there is only one source.

Proposition 30. One source may so dominate that the use of any other sources in the item will not bring the item into balance.

Proposition 31. Government officials are less dominant as sources than interest groups.

Proposition 32. News items and opinion items may offset each other to provide overall balance.

Proposition 33. Letters from interest groups can dominate letters' columns.

Proposition 34. Viewpoint can vary from the front section to the back section of a paper depending on how important the story is at a certain time or depending on the importance of the source.

Proposition 35. The stronger the viewpoint on an issue the longer the article.

Qualitative Analysis and Interviewee Observations

The following propositions resulted from the qualitative analysis of news items and from interviewee observations about the debate over the formation of COATS found in Chapter 6.

Proposition 36. Official government announcements are primary sources of news about government policy.

Proposition 37. Newspapers balance official government announcements with reactions from interest groups and opposition legislators.

Proposition 38. Question Period is a main source of quotations from government leaders and of reaction by opposition legislators.

Proposition 39. Interest group members and opposition legislators have an advantage in getting press because they know what an announcement has said.

Proposition 40. Government officials are more tempered in their comments than are interest group members.

Proposition 41. Sources put in the position of providing reaction make comments which are more sensational or controversial than the comments to which they are reacting.

Proposition 42. Reactions to comments have an additive effect in making a story more controversial and in augmenting a conflict.

Proposition 43. Events are an important source of news and can be an effective means of getting publicity for the sponsoring group's viewpoint.

Proposition 44. The press will lose interest in a story unless the parties in an issue are willing to debate publicly.

Proposition 45. Announcements of government policy make news, but without conflict or controversy coverage is limited to the announcement only and there is very little followup.

Proposition 46. Press coverage is frequently fragmented, showing a lack of awareness of connections to previous stories and indicating an absence of followup and a failure to investigate leads.

Role of the Print Media in Policy Making

In Chapter 7, findings were examined in relation to the central question of the study and the four sub-problems. The following propositions were formulated from the assessment.

Proposition 47. The presence or potential for conflict is the most important criterion for covering a policy issue; other important criteria include the public stature of the participants, the impact of the policy, and the past coverage of the issue.

Proposition 48. Quality in the coverage of a policy issue is more closely related to depth or detail than to breadth or extent of coverage.

Proposition 49. Policy makers do not perceive the print media as covering policy issues well because they give more coverage to the conflictual and sensational aspects of a policy story than to an in-depth examination of the issues.

Proposition 50. The majority of individual stories lack neutrality although overall balance might be achieved in covering a policy issue.

Proposition 51. The media's tendency to sensationalize the controversial aspects of a story gives rise to bias.

Proposition 52. The media reduce all controversies to two viewpoints.

Proposition 53. Media coverage of controversy polarizes the positions of the participants.

Proposition 54. The media have indirect impact on policy decisions.

Proposition 55. Politicians mistrust the media and discount their viewpoint on policy issues because of past experiences with negative news coverage.

Proposition 56. The groups competing for the politicians' attention generally have greater influence than the news media on the politician.

Proposition 57. Group members are influenced more than policymakers by media coverage; the group members, in turn, put pressure on the policymakers.

Proposition 58. The media influence in setting the public agenda is tempered by their inability to explain issues well.

Proposition 59. The media will have little effect in shaping the public agenda on those matters in which the public shows little interest.

Proposition 60. Media coverage of an issue affects the political and personal lives of the participants.

Proposition 61. The media serve a number of important functions in the policymaking process, including identification of problems, of policymaker proposals, of interest groups and their proposals, of policy content, and of reactions to policy.

Proposition 62. The media function better in the roles of information circulation, stereotyping, watchdog, agenda-setting, and issue creation than in the roles of context-setting and issue resolution.

Proposition 63. The press does better in relaying policymaker and interest group concerns and proposals than they do in identifying problems or suggesting solutions.

The foregoing propositions form the basis for the main conclusions drawn in the following section.

Conclusions

The conclusions of the study are derived from a synthesis of conclusions emerging from a review of the literature and the propositions comprising the findings of the study. They are organized and presented in accord with the four research questions that guided the endeavor. Since the conclusions are inferences drawn from a particular case, their generalizability is more suggestive than prescriptive.

Criteria for Newsworthiness

1. Conflict and controversy are the news media's most important criteria for newsworthiness. The conflict between the Minister and the ATA was the most important reason for news coverage of the debate about the Council on Alberta

Teaching Standards. Controversial statements by a source helped to assure news coverage and good positioning. The print media published longer items about controversy than about reconciliation and announcements. Public debate of an issue between parties made the issue more interesting to the press and prolonged press coverage. Coverage continued as long as the parties were willing to continue to debate the issue publicly. Although the prominence of the participants and the impact of the policy on education were significant reasons for covering COATS, conflict and controversy were the most important.

This study confirms earlier claims regarding the more cynical, confrontational style in today's news coverage, with less emphasis on substantive issues and more on conflict and controversy. In providing this kind of coverage, newspapers have conformed to the standards of television in order to appeal to a wider audience. Conflict and controversy make a story interesting and provide drama and action.

2. Continued reaction prolongs coverage. As long as the parties were willing to react to each other's comments and oppose each other's proposals, the media covered the Council. When the parties agreed to not discuss the issue publicly, the media soon lost interest in the story. The reaction created controversy. Since controversy was the most important criterion for covering the issue, it had to be present for the COATS story to continue to get coverage.

3. The news media rely on interest groups for reaction to policy. As an established part of Canadian social fabric, interest groups are called upon by the news media to react to government policy. By reacting controversially in opposing policy, the interest groups increase their public profile. In COATS, the teachers' association successfully publicized its viewpoint by opposing the Council. Events (like the Annual Representative Assembly of the ATA) also worked effectively in presenting the sponsoring group's viewpoint and in keeping the story alive. In addition, local events (such as the ATA information meetings) provided a forum for reaction. Reporters also called upon local

representatives of the ATA for comments. This provided the ATA an advantage over the Minister who was the only spokesperson for his position.

Although little seems to be written about the role and nature of reaction in news coverage, the literature points to the role of Question Period as a source of reaction to government policy. It is described as an ideal news event, involving public personalities in conflict. This study supported the importance of the role of Question Period, but showed interest groups were more significant in providing reaction probably because there were only four opposition members in the Alberta Legislature at the time of COATS.

Quality in Print News Coverage

4. Depth of news coverage is more important than amount of coverage in determining quality of reporting. Although coverage of COATS was extensive, the policy issue was not covered well because the reporting lacked depth. The print media did not do well in covering the policy issue in depth. They gave more coverage to the conflictual and sensational aspects of the story than to an in-depth examination of the issues.

This corroborates previous studies which considered omissions of relevant material and inadequacy of explanation as more frequent errors of inaccuracy than length or extent of coverage.

5. Rather than being proactive in investigating stories, journalists depend on events and sources for news material. Question Period provided comments from the Minister and opposition MLAs without requiring further investigation. Reactions were readily obtained from the ATA. News conferences and events were also an easy source of information. An unawareness of connections to previous stories, a lack of followup and a failure to investigate leads resulted in inconsistency and shallowness in coverage of the COATS debate.

The review of literature points to a decline in quality of newspaper coverage largely due to an emphasis on profits and style over content in order to compete with television. Investigative reporting is costly; the coverage of controversy takes less resources and has wider audience appeal.

6. While overall coverage of an issue might be balanced, most individual items show bias toward one or the other party in a controversy. Even in news items where journalists aim to be objective, a majority of stories about COATS showed imbalance. A number of reasons for the failure to achieve complete balance (and objectivity) in coverage emerged from the coverage of COATS. Firstly, reporters and editors did not plan their coverage of the issue, but rather they relied partly on an intuitive sense of fairness in keeping track of stories and partly on training. Secondly, getting the story and making the deadline were more important than questions of fairness. If other viewpoints are unavailable, the story ran without their input. Where one source was more available than the other, that source was quoted more frequently. The importance of the source or the controversial nature of the source's comments caused imbalance. Thirdly, controversy led to imbalance in coverage, partly because the more sensational statements got more prominence in a story and made more interesting headlines. Fourthly, in covering both sides reporters sought "extreme positions," thus polarizing and distorting viewpoints. Finally, reporters didn't report the truth; rather they reported what people said. Although this is the essence of objectivity, it is also the basis for poor news coverage. In this case, sources said what got the best headlines, rather than what brought to light the underlying reasons for disagreement or for decision making.

Although journalists claim to practice balance and objectivity in news coverage, this study enlarges on the reasons for bias and supports previous suggestions that indicate that balance and objectivity are difficult, if not impossible, to achieve.

7. Newspapers create controversy by seeking reaction to government announcements. Although journalists seek reaction as a means of being objective and

creating balance, the practice seems to hinder rather than help the political process because it often results in imbalance. In the case of COATS, government announcements were offset by reactions from the ATA and opposition legislators. Interest groups and opposition politicians depended on the media need for reaction to get publicity for their own viewpoints. Often the reaction got better positioning than the announcement because of its controversial nature. Sources providing reaction seemed to make comments which were more sensational or controversial than the comments to which they were reacting. In preparing the reaction, the person providing the comment had the advantage of knowing what the announcement said.

Mass Media Impact on Policy Making

8. The media have indirect impact on policy decisions. In COATS the impact of the media was mediated through other groups in the policy process. These other group members were often influenced more by media coverage than the policymakers. They, in turn, generally had greater influence than the news media on the politician.

Because of past experiences, the Minister mistrusted the media and discount their viewpoint on policy issues. This was partly due to the media tendency to dwell on the sensational rather than providing in-depth coverage of issues. In addition, these other groups, including interest groups, party workers, and other legislators, competed for the attention of the policy actors. They were more influential than the news media on the policymakers.

This suggests a "two-step" flow notion of communications (similar to that proposed by Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955) where the media influence group members who in turn put pressure on the policymakers. It is this pressure from other groups, particularly from caucus, that has the greatest influence on the key policymakers such as ministers.

This examination of mass media coverage of policy making confirms the notion that the mass media are ineffective in bringing about change unless combined with other

influences. The mass media may have greater impact on the agendas of the various publics these in turn have greater influence than the mass media on the political agenda.

9. Media coverage is less influential in shaping policy than individual and group pressure on legislators, particularly those of the party in power. In arriving at a settlement in COATS, teachers had the greatest impact through pressure on government legislators. This may have been partly because 11 of the 75 Conservative MLAs at the time of the COATS debate were teachers or former teachers. (Two of the four opposition MLAs were teachers.) In addition, many teachers exerted influence at the grass roots level as party workers in constituencies. On the other hand, ATA use of the mass media tended to polarize the issue and to perpetuate negative stereotypes about teacher self-interest.

10. The mass media effect on the public agenda is limited by the public's interest in the issue. The public showed no real interest in the COATS issue. This was partly because the issue was not explained well, but also because the public did not see themselves as having a vested interest in the issue. The public did not see that the issue was more than one of teacher self-interest; they did not see that it directly affected the education of their children. Many people also thought that the Minister was correct in forming the Council. For these reasons, the mass media had no effect in setting the public agenda on COATS. Rather they set the agenda of particular groups in the audience (i.e., teachers and legislators) who had a special interest in the issue.

Theoretically, the mass media would set the the public agenda, and once on the public agenda, the public would put pressure on the policymaker. Thus, the issue would become more important on the political agenda. However, as in COATS, if the issue does not become a part of the public agenda, then there is no public pressure exerted on the policymaker. Nevertheless, pressure may be exerted by special interest groups.

This conclusion suggests the media may have greater effect on particular sections of the audience, such as teachers and legislators, rather than on the public as a whole. They, in turn, pressure the politician and establish the issue on the political agenda.

11. Framing of an issue limits coverage and affects mass media impact on policymaking. The COATS issue was framed as a political and possibly union issue rather than as an educational issue. This influenced the nature of the coverage, so that stories were limited to only certain viewpoints. It also influenced media impact. While an educational angle might have appealed to a larger audience of parents and established the issue on the public agenda, political framing limited the audience to teachers and legislators.

Choice of frame might also have accounted in part for the conflictual nature of the coverage. An educational angle might have been less controversial than picturing the story from a political frame.

Contextual factors might have influenced the framing. Had COATS been established by another Minister or even in another province, framing of the issue might have been different. The poor relationship between Mr. King and the ATA certainly affected the media's choice of angle. In addition, the province's reputation for anti-unionism and the Conservative Party's position on labor issues might have also been a factor in framing the story and in the conflictual nature of the coverage. Thus, context seems to be a factor in establishing the angle of coverage and might be one reason why it is so difficult to discover press impact on policy making. Contextual factors make generalizability from case to case more difficult.

Functions of the Mass Media in Policy Making

12. The media perform a greater function in identifying and relaying interest group proposals than they do in identifying problems and suggesting solutions. An examination of the coverage of the COATS debate showed

that the media functioned more in roles as common carriers, less as watchdogs, and very little as political actors. By identifying problems and proposed solutions as suggested by policymakers and interest groups, the media serve a common carrier role. They do this through news stories. By identifying interest group proposals and reactions to policymaker proposals, they function as watchdogs. Through both news stories and editorials, they function as watchdogs. It is only when the press identifies the problems and suggests solutions that they become political actors. They perform the policy actor role mainly through editorials.

Most press coverage in COATS functioned in common carrier roles, relaying the viewpoints and proposals of either the Minister or the ATA for the makeup and about the need for the Council. The media performed roles as common carriers as well as watchdogs by communicating problems with the policy and alternatives for solution as suggested by the ATA. The media played only minor roles as policy actors since editorials generally suggested naive and simplistic ways of ending the conflict. They demonstrated little understanding of problems with the Council and suggested few alternatives for solving the problems. By suggesting problems and solutions in editorials, they would have performed greater roles as watchdogs and political actors.

This study confirmed previous research which indicated the press perform a greater role in identifying and relaying interest group proposals to the public than they do in the articulation and identification of problems. Items which influence policy decisions were few in number. More items were published for information purposes rather than persuasion. The media served more as common carriers, less as watchdogs and least as policy actors.

13. The media function better in the roles of stereotyping, agenda-setting, and issue creation than in roles of context-setting and issue resolution. The media's functioning better in some areas than others seems to be related

to their approach to covering policy issues. While coverage of conflict enhanced the former functions, the lack of in-depth coverage inhibited context-setting and issue resolution.

Although unintentional, a side-effect of the coverage of COATS was to perpetuate stereotypes about the parties involved in the conflict. The Minister was seen as uncompromising and unwilling to accept alternatives. The ATA were seen as protective of self-interests above concern for student well-being. Because of these stereotypes, the image of education in the province suffered. It was partly because of concern about these stereotypes and about public image that a compromise occurred.

Although the media performed less well in establishing the issue as part of the public agenda, media coverage pushed the issue higher onto the agenda of Conservative MLAs. Because they wanted to be seen as doing something about the issue, the legislators put pressure on the Minister of Education to bring about a compromise. This probably was one of the more important functions served by the media.

Some of the participants were quick to suggest that the media had a great role in creating the debate about the formation of the Council. Although the conflict was not created by the media, it was prolonged by the media. In this way they performed a function in issue creation.

The media did little to describe the background to the formation of the Council, but rather did much to continue the conflict between the Minister and the ATA. Because the coverage of the Council lacked depth, the media performed poorly in relation to the context-setting function. Similarly fuelling the controversy did not help but hindered issue resolution.

This research demonstrated the application of a number of press functions such as stereotyping, agenda-setting, issue creation, context-setting and issue resolution. It showed that these are related to the quality and kind of reporting. The coverage of conflict enhanced some of the functions while others were inhibited by the lack of depth of coverage.

14. Media functions are closely correlated with media impact. When the media function in roles of policy actor such as the identification of problems and suggestion of proposals, they have a greater impact on the policy process. Their impact is moderate when performing watchdog functions such as the identification and transmittal of interest group proposals. It is least when they are simply transmitting information in a common carrier role such as policymaker proposals and policy content. If media impact on the policymaking process is minor, it is because they are performing a minor role.

In covering COATS, the media performed less of a function in areas which would have had a greater impact on the policy decision and more of a function as common carriers. Coverage focused on the conflict and did little to suggest ways of resolving the policy differences. Thus, the media impact was not as great as it could have been.

15. The quality of news coverage affects how well the mass media function in policy making. Because the media's coverage of COATS lacked depth, they did not perform well in context-setting nor did they do well in setting the public agenda. Because the media failed to look analytically at the issue and did not propose alternative solutions, they failed to help in issue resolution. Although they did not create the issue, they prolonged it by dwelling on conflict and controversy.

Quality of coverage seems to be related to a hierarchy of press functions in policy making, as suggested by Black (1982, p. 249). Functions should fit into this hierarchy depending on the quality of coverage required to fulfill these functions well.

Journalists might dispute a role as watchdogs and political actors by claiming that they do not create or interpret the news but only report what happens and what people say. The reality is that news coverage has an effect beyond the simple transmittal or circulation of information. Whether intentional or not, the media function in all these roles. By choosing to cover an issue, they create news. By choosing how to cover an issue, they interpret the news. Their effectiveness and how well they fulfill the functions depends on the quality of news coverage.

Implications

This final section of the thesis identifies some implications arising from the study for journalists in their coverage of politics and for policy actors in their dealings with the press as well as for scholars interested in further study of this relationship.

Implications for Journalists

Formerly the print media played a more significant role in the political process. This has changed partly because politicians (as suggested by the Royal Commission on Newspapers, 1981, p. 137) may pay more attention to the "image-building" aspects of television than to the print media. Newspapers, in order to compete with television, have tried to duplicate the action and drama portrayed so well on television. If newspapers are to regain any of the impact they once had, they must capitalize on their unique strengths and avoid copying television. Five suggestions for accomplishing this are elaborated below.

1. To improve depth of coverage, newspapers should revive the practice of spending more time and effort in covering and trying to explain issues. This study showed that, although the coverage of COATS was extensive, it lacked detail. The reporting was superficial, dealing mainly with the conflict between the Minister and the ATA and avoiding the underlying reasons for the conflict. The print media have the ability to explain complex issues. To avoid doing so in order to appeal to the general reader denies meaningful content for those readers who make a difference politically. To reach this audience, newspapers need to provide more in-depth coverage of politics.

2. Reporters should cover more than the obvious stories coming from Question Period. This study confirmed the findings of others that news coverage misses much of what happens in government. For example, efforts to compromise through negotiations between the Department of Education and the ATA went uncovered. Mr. King noted that during his seven years as Minister of Education he had been contacted only three or four times for background sessions. No efforts were made by reporters to discover the

Minister's agenda nor his thinking on educational issues. Instead, reporters covered mainly those stories from the formal sessions of the Legislature and the reaction to these stories.

3. In terms of balance of coverage, reporters and editors should recognize their personal biases and those of the organizational culture in which they work. In addition, they should realize that objectivity is impossible and seek to gain reputations for trustworthiness. This study demonstrated the difficulty of achieving individual balance in stories. Partly because of the pressure of deadlines, both sides are not always represented well. The tendency to give better placement to controversial statements also causes imbalance. Rather, the print media should devote more of their energies to explaining the context and interpreting the news, at the same time admitting their biases to their readers.

4. Greater attention should be given to coordinating news and editorial content by taking the time to track stories and to plan overall how stories and issues will be covered. As pointed out in the findings of this study, seldom is consideration given to the direction or depth of coverage. The result is superficial rather than comprehensive coverage of issues. Issues are not explained well and often much that happens goes uncovered.

5. Reporters and editors should play down controversy and the sensational in favor of better coverage of issues and viewpoints. It is important that the public be aware of conflicts, but the publishing of sensationalized comments without consideration of their validity is irresponsible. The media should avoid being a forum for exaggeration and deception.

These suggestions imply some rethinking of journalistic ethics and the way newspeople cover events and issues. Because of their effect on people and institutions, the media have a public obligation which is greater than that of other businesses. Because of this obligation, the media should reflect more closely the variety of public viewpoints and should provide a forum for their expression. Such an expanded role would require that the media provide greater depth and more responsible coverage. Newspapers particularly have the capability of providing this high quality of coverage. The policymaking process would

benefit from greater public participation and the media would become more significant players in policy decisions.

Implications for Policymakers and Interest Groups

Politicians and interest group leaders have altered their approach to the news media in order to improve their public image, but these attempts seem to be unsuccessful. Rather than succumbing to the technological demands of the media, policymakers and interest groups should be proactive in developing a relationship of respect with the news media which would mutually benefit both parties. Politicians and interest groups would be provided a forum for their ideas, the media would have easy access to important policy deliberations, and the public would become better informed. The following suggestions might facilitate better press relations and the greater exchange of ideas.

1. As sources, policymakers and interest group leaders should take time to explain issues. The temptation is to respond in clips of information which fit television's format, but do little to provide depth to coverage. If politicians would avoid the "scrum" and invite reporters to meet with them one-on-one in a setting where issues could be explained, news coverage of politics would soon change for the better. Journalists would better understand the issues and would be better able to explain the background and complexity of viewpoints.

2. Politicians and interest group leaders should avoid trying to use the news media for their own purposes or as a forum for debate without carefully weighing the consequences. Rather, as sources, they should be open in the expression of their true intent and avoid controversial statements which will inflame and polarize issues. There were no winners in this propaganda war between the Minister of Education and the Alberta Teachers' Association. In this case, publicity did not always work to the advantage of the party receiving the most news coverage. Rather it perpetuated stereotypes which were destructive to the individual parties and to education as a whole.

3. Policy actors and interest groups should develop and use the communication systems within their own organizations. This study showed that, while the mass media were fast in relaying messages, they were ineffective and inaccurate as a means of reaching group members. ATA internal communications eventually were a better means of reaching teachers. The Minister was unsuccessful in communicating his objectives because he did not have an established system for reaching teachers. Neither was he successful in informing his colleagues in the Legislature about his motives or the purposes of COATS, probably because of a lack of foresight and preparedness.

Implications for Scholars

A minority of studies of mass media effects have taken a holistic approach. Most have used quantitative methods to consider variables in isolation one from another. In using the case study approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods, this study has permitted a holistic understanding of the relationship of the mass media in policy making and, at least in part, has been effective in describing the multiple realities of the relationship. Many aspects of the relationship have been left only partially explored. Some of these aspects are suggested for further research. In addition, further application of the research approach and methods is recommended.

1. Although the findings of this research corroborated other studies which showed mass media impact was moderate in politics, it also revealed variations in the nature and direction of this impact. For example, it showed that mass media impact was indirect and had more influence on interest groups and other legislators than on the Minister of Education. These findings cannot be generalized to all situations of mass media coverage of the policymaking process. Questions still linger as to the amount of impact the mass media have in policy making and as to the relationship of the mass media to the policymaking process. It is doubtful that there is a definitive answer. Yet, much can be discovered and the whole picture will be better clarified as further cases are explored. Additional

clarification will assist journalists and policymakers in improving their relationship, in bettering the media product, but more importantly it will help them in mending the image of politicians and in encouraging greater public participation in politics.

2. Most journalists would probably disagree with the suggestion arising from this inquiry that conflict and controversy play a major role in the mass media coverage of politics. Accordingly this finding requires further examination. The importance of conflict and controversy as criteria for newsworthiness and their effect on the quality of news coverage and balance should be explored. Further study of this topic would assist journalists in achieving an equilibrium in covering conflicts so that the public is better informed.

3. Journalists would also disagree with the contention that the press play a passive rather than a proactive role in gathering news. Thus, this finding requires further documentation. One approach to discovering more about this phenomenon would be to use content analysis and interviews to examine the context of comments in articles. Such an approach would reveal the conditions under which the information was obtained and show the effort required in gathering the news. The result could be a great improvement in the quality of reporting.

4. The whole area of the functions of news coverage in the policymaking process warrants further examination. Two lines of research seem particularly fruitful: one a further exploration of the functions of the news media related to the stages of policy making and the other showing the relative importance of each function. The relationships of impact and quality to mass media functions are new to this study and require confirmation. Such study should further demonstrate the limits of the relationship between journalists and politicians and show the benefits and ways of improving that association.

5. This inquiry provided evidence that quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other in a case study to provide a holistic view of a phenomenon. In addition, it showed that quantitative methods, at least content analysis, are not incompatible

with naturalistic inquiry. The eclectic approach, using the case study and combining quantitative and qualitative methods, should be applied more frequently to studies of the mass media and politics. The result will be a greater understanding about the whole relationship.

6. The principal approach to data analysis in this investigation involved the development and refining of propositions. The process began with the development of conclusions from the review of literature. Preliminary propositions were derived from the content analysis. These were tested in interviews and further refined. Additional propositions were added to explain the findings. These were compared to the conclusions from the literature. From these conclusions were drawn. The use of propositions has provided bite-sized morsels which are manageable in understanding a phenomenon like the relationship of the mass media and policy making. The process has potential in theory building and is recommended as a valuable approach in data analysis.

In Retrospect

Most home builders dream of mansions but are satisfied with split levels. Similarly, the expectations of this study were much greater than the final product. Still, the results are satisfying. Although the findings of this investigation may have application to only particular contexts, much has been revealed about the relationship of the mass media and policy making and much more could be done even with the material that was gathered. Any one of the subproblems could be enlarged into a major study. Still, as modest as this effort is, a number of interesting, even significant, but perhaps unsurprising conclusions have emerged. These include: (a) the suggestion that conflict and controversy play a major role in the mass media coverage of politics, (b) the notion that the media are passive rather than proactive in gathering news in the policy arena, and (c) the concept that impact and quality of coverage are related to media functions in the policy process. In addition, at least two methodological considerations have been proposed: (a) the use of the case study approach,

incorporating a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods, to study mass media effects and (b) the use of propositions for data analysis and theory building.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CORRESPONDENCE

March --, 1987

Dear

I appreciate your willingness to be interviewed for my study about the print media's coverage of the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards (COATS). In preparation for our meeting in your office on -- , I have enclosed a set of propositions about the newspaper coverage and about the interaction of the various groups and the news media. In addition, attached is a sequence of events from the period being studied. This information will serve as a basis for our discussion. Since I do not want to take more than an hour of your valuable time, I would appreciate your reviewing this information prior to our meeting.

The purpose of this study is to examine one facet of the relationship between policy making and media coverage as seen in COATS. Hopefully, information will be generated about news media influence on policy making and about policy actors interaction through the media.

To assure accuracy, I would like to tape record our interview if you agree. Subsequently, I would like to be able to use your name in relation to the information you provide. However, I will strictly respect your desires in this regard. You will be offered the opportunity to read any excerpts of the transcript which will be used in the thesis.

Thank you for your help with this matter. Please feel free to address any questions you might have to my thesis committee chairman, Dr. W.H. Worth, at 432-4906. In addition, please contact me if I can answer questions. My home phone number is 435-2320.

Sincerely,

John R. Fisher
Ph.D. Candidate

cc: Dr. W.H. Worth

May 12, 1988

Dear

Enclosed is a transcript of quotations I have used in writing my thesis about mass media coverage of the formation of the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards.

If any of the quotations do not reflect accurately the situation at that time, I would appreciate your feedback. Please return any changes by May 23.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

John R. Fisher
Ph.D. Candidate

Enclosures

APPENDIX B

PROPOSITIONS

The following propositions were sent to interviewees prior to interviews.

1. The ATA received greater exposure and a more favorable presentation of its viewpoint in news stories, while the government received greater support in editorials.

2. Controversial positions and tactics got better coverage in terms of both position and space, but were detrimental to the source's viewpoint in the long run.

3. The print media relied heavily upon the availability of government and of ATA officials in covering COATS rather than going beyond these traditional sources of news.

4. Overall coverage of the story over the two-and-a-half month period was balanced, with items favoring one party balancing out items favoring the other.

5. The print media served a function of opinion-sharing among those directly interested and involved in the issue, but had little direct influence on individuals outside the stakeholder groups.

6. The media served as a means of communication when the parties in the controversy were not talking to each other.

7. The media appeared to play little role in agenda setting, in that they did not create public debate among individuals or groups outside the parties involved.

8. Media coverage of COATS served a number of functions beyond simply informing the public of the policy content: it alerted the government and the public to problems in the policy, informed the government and the public about the stakes and competing proposals, and evaluated the policy content in an effort to stimulate change.

9. Use of the media by the ATA and media coverage of the issue had little effect on the policy outcome.

APPENDIX C

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

The following sequence of events as reported by the news media was sent to interviewees prior to the interviews.

A. Period 1: March 29 to April 30, 1985

March 29, 1985 - Minister announced formation of the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards. Reaction by Alberta Teachers' Association.

April 1, 1985 - Minister attends ATA meeting; not permitted to express his viewpoint.

April 2, 1985 - Minister sends letter to all teachers in the province explaining Council and asking for teacher nominations. ATA reaction.

April 11-13, 1985 - ATA Annual Representative Assembly approves resolutions to take action against the Council. Minister does not attend opening session.

April 13, 1985 - Ghitter expresses opposition to the Council.

April 19, 1985 - Minister sets meeting with the ATA for April 26.

April 26, 1985 - Minister meets with ATA executive. Unapproved ATA working paper suggesting job action leaked to press.

B. Period 2: May 1 to June 19, 1985

May 5, 1985 - ATA rejects Minister's proposals from April 26 meeting.

May 7, 1985 - ATA outlines strategy to stop Council. Minister indicates Council will go ahead with or without ATA representative.

May 1985 - ATA continues to hold local meetings with teachers and prepares petition and letter writing campaign.

May 18, 1985 - Minister indicates he will announce appointments to the Council shortly.

June 13, 1985 - Minister tells trustees he will make appointments without ATA representative.

C. Period 3: Agreement

June 19, 1985 - Minister and ATA announce agreement.

June 21, 1985 - Council members are announced.

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The following questions were used as a guide in interviewing respondents. They were adapted depending upon the organization represented by the subject.

1. What was your involvement during the public debate over the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards?

2. You have had an opportunity to preview a sequence of events. Are there changes that should be made to the sequence of events?

3. Would you agree that the ATA received greater exposure and a more favorable presentation of its viewpoint in news stories? Why would this have occurred?

4. Would you agree that the government received greater support for its viewpoint in editorials? Why would this happen?

5. What are newspapers' criteria for judging newsworthiness? Does controversy get better coverage in terms of both position and space? Was controversy detrimental to the ATA position in the long run?

6. Did the print media take the initiative in covering this event or did they rely heavily upon the ATA and the Minister to keep the story going?

7. Did the news media seek to have balance in their news stories? Was there balance in coverage in individual newspapers? Overall?

8. Did the news media do a good job of covering COATS so that the public understood the issues?

9. What was your purpose in going to the news media? Did the news media serve a function of communicating between parties when the parties were not talking to each other? Did they serve a function of opinion-sharing, so that your viewpoint was relayed to the other party? or to the other stakeholder groups? or to teachers? Did the news media have any influence on persons outside the educational field?

10. What policymaking functions did the news media serve? How well did they inform the public about the content of COATS? How well did they alert the public and government officials to problems in the policy? How well did they inform the public and government officials of the stakes of interest groups and competing proposals? Did they evaluate the policy content in an effort to stimulate change?

11. Did use of the media by the ATA and media coverage of the issue have any effect on the policy outcome? What effect?

12. Have you changed your own approach to dealing with the media because of your experience with COATS? What have you changed? What is the best way to handle disputes about policy between government and stakeholder groups? What is the best way to inform a group like teachers about an issue? What is the best way to inform the public?

13. Who else in your organization should I talk to about newspaper coverage of this issue? Who should I talk to in the news media?